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HISTORY OF WISCONSIN

UNDER THE

Dominion of France.

BY

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MADISON, WIS.:
MIDLAND PUBLISHING CO.
1890.

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TO MY COMRADES
OF THE
GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC,
DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN,
THIS EARLY HISTORY OF OUR STATE
IS DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

This book deals with one of the most important chapters of American history; and yet one heretofore quite unknown. The story of the French Empire in America has long been invested with a deep dramatic and philosophic interest; for, it has been well understood that upon the downfall of that dominion depended the rise of American liberty. And in these pages I hope to show that the French struggle for supremacy over the continent was, to a large extent, decided by events that took place in Wisconsin. Here was the entering wedge of disaster and ruin. Here happened the real although obscure crisis in a great drama of which the Fall of Quebec was merely the closing scene.

The main reason why these matters have not been understood is, that the history of the West has yet to be written. Our chief historical works have heretofore come from the far East; and contemplated at that distance, affairs in the West have seemed but dim and trivial

episodes in the story of what has happened on the narrow strip of land between the Alleghanies and the Atlantic. An adequate history of America can not be written from so one-sided a point of view.

But the materials for the new history are being gathered rapidly and in great abundance. It is surprising how much light has been thrown, within a very few years, upon the early history of the West by such great publications as the *Collection de Manuscrits relatifs a la Nouvelle France*, the *Margry Manuscripts*, *Brymmers Canadian Reports* and *Winsor's Narrative and Critical History*; also by the invaluable volumes of *Faillon*, *Ferland*, *Tailhan*, *Harrisse*, *Sulte*, *Shea*, *Parkman*, *Neill*, *Butterfield* and others; last but by no means least, by the material printed in the *Collections of the Wisconsin and Minnesota Historical Societies* or preserved in their libraries.

And yet the most important part of this work remains to be done. The State of Wisconsin ought immediately to take measures for the exploration of the Archives at Paris where there are still sealed up many invaluable papers pertaining to her past. Wisconsin, among all her sister states, occupies the central and most

important position in the early annals of the country; and her citizens ought to feel a patriotic interest in having her history brought fully to the light. It has been my chief hope in writing this book, that it might contribute somewhat to that result.

I have been compelled, in many different parts of this volume, to very decidedly dissent from the conclusions reached by that eloquent and indefatigable historian, Parkman, both in his book upon La Salle and that upon the Conspiracy of Pontiac. But this, however much to be regretted, was unavoidable. Mr. Parkman has been amazingly unfortunate in his choice of La Salle as his hero and "the chief actor in the discovery of the West." The greatest genius, crippled by such misconceptions, could only attain to distorted and deceptive views. Similarly, although not to the same great extent, his account of the Conspiracy of Pontiac is defective; and that striking passage in Western history remains yet to be described from a point of view which has entirely escaped his notice.

I expect and desire to be criticised myself. All but the first quarter of this book is, in every essential respect, entirely new. The history, especially of the period from 1700 to 1763, I

have been compelled to construct out of data widely scattered through the different collections of documents; and in work of such a pioneering kind, errors will inevitably be found. But for every important statement ample reference to authorities has been given. And I now dismiss this book, believing that it contains a faithful picture of events with which every citizen of Wisconsin and the West ought to be familiar.

MENOMONIE, WIS.

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CHAPTER I.

NICOLET AND RADISSON—THE DISCOVERY OF THE WEST.

1638-1662.

The gaze of the French colonists in America was, from the very first, drawn to Wisconsin as the chief centre of interest in the West. Within twenty-five years after the founding of the colony at Quebec, some knowledge had been gained of Lakes Superior and Winnebago, and of the Fox river. The Mascoutins dwelling upon the river just named had been heard of, also another nation living near Lake Winnebago—"the men of the sea," a strange people of altogether different language and habits from other Indians. Thus Wisconsin had emerged into a certain dim light, while all the rest of the vast interior was wrapped in darkness.

The story of "the men of the sea" above all else fired the imagination of the French. The little band of traders and missionaries gathered at Quebec, had no conception of the vastness of the continent which they were seeking

to control and to convert. As late as 1654, the Jesuit, Mercier, declared that it was about nine days journey, or a hundred leagues from the strange people on Lake Winnebago to the sea that separated America from China.¹ And that people, it was reported had not only come from the ocean but closely resembled the Orientals in speech and customs. To the eager fancy of the French, Eastern Wisconsin had thus become the threshold of a fairy-land; and Fox river the long sought highway to the riches and splendors of the Orient.

Jean Nicolet was sent, in the year 1638 probably,² to negotiate a peace between this

(1) *Relation*, 1654. The idea had thus persisted long after Nicolet's trip.

(2) Those able investigators, Sulte and Butterfield have put this date in 1634. But I am forced to dissent from their generally accepted conclusion, for the following reasons:

(a) "There is no probability," Sulte says (*Wis. Hist. Coll. VIII*, 193,) "that Nicolet went to Wisconsin in that short period of less than ten months—in 1638." The trip each way, he asserts, would consume ten weeks. But let us see. De Lignery's expedition left the Winnebago village on Doty's Island, August 24; ascended the river farther than Nicolet did, employed some days in laying waste the country, then turned about and reached Montreal September 28—a period of just thirty-five days. (*Crespel. De Lignery's Expedition, Wis. Hist. Coll. X.*, 51-3.) Nicolet could have done his work and returned as quickly,

mysterious Wisconsin people and some tribes living farther eastward. Having already passed some ten or twelve years of his life among the Indians, he was well fitted for this perilous trip of a thousand miles into the depths of the wilderness. Going first to the Huron country and thence embarking for Wisconsin with an escort of but seven savages, he safely reached his destination. The strange people came forth to greet their visitor with a delight tempered with awe. They believed him to be a manitou or spirit; and when Nicolet discharged his pistols, the women and children fled in dismay, "seeing a man carry thunder in both hands."

Nicolet, on his part, was also the victim of

the facilities of travel being precisely the same. What time now would the trip from Three Rivers to the Winnebagoes have demanded? In 1634 Bre'beuf made the trip, an average one, from Three Rivers to the Huron country in thirty days. (Parkman, *Jesuits in N. America*, 55.) Adding now fifteen days, a large estimate, as consumed in going from the Hurons to the Winnebagoes, we have forty-five days. Or for the trip both ways and the doing of all that was done, eighty days, instead of the thirty weeks that Sulte claims as necessary. I do not by any means say that the trip was made in eighty days; Sulte's church register leaves much larger intervals. But the whole basis of his argument is thus overthrown. Again, Dablon in 1670 made an equally difficult journey of 1,500 miles in 40 days (*Relation*, 1671); Nicolet's journey was not one half

illusions. Believing that he was about to meet a people from the stately Orient, he had clothed himself, as a dress of ceremony, with a large garment of China damask embroidered with flowers and birds of various colors. Thus arrayed, and with a pistol in each hand he advanced to meet "the men of the sea." In a moment all his dreams vanished. He saw before him only a mob of savages, plumed but naked, differing in no essential respect except language, from the red men with whom he had dwelt for years. They were in fact, the Winnebagoes, a detached branch of the Sioux or Dakota race.

In spite of these mutual misapprehensions the business of the embassy went on well.

longer. Consult also as to a day's journey, Tailhan in Perrot, *Memoire*, 240.

(b) The plain indication of great haste. If Nicolet had nearly a year to spend in Wisconsin, as Sulte thinks, would he not have made that "three days journey to the Great Waters?" Instead, he concludes his treaties and sets out or home.

(c) The *Relations* of the disputed years, constantly refer to Nicolet, but with no hint of his discoveries—no less than twelve such references in 1636 and 1637. Bre'beuf's silence is also utterly incredible if Nicolet was then really bound for the West.

(d) "Nicolet had nothing to do with the Jesuits," says Sulte. On this consult allusions referred to above. The argument about Nicolet's marriage need not detain us.

“The news of Nicolet’s coming spread to the surrounding places; four or five thousand men assembled.” Each of the chiefs gave a grand banquet in honor of their guest; and after the feasting the terms of peace were arranged to the satisfaction of all.

Nicolet then made a flying trip up the Fox river to the land of the Mascoutins; and there heard of the not distant waters of the Mississippi. “The Sieur Nicolet,” writes Vimont, “who has penetrated farthest into those dis-

(e) “Epoch of discovery closed in 1635.” But Nicolet was sent not to discover but to negotiate a peace — a matter his employers were specially interested in.

(f) Butterfield’s additional arguments; first, that the Ottawa was closed in 1638, by Iroquois raids. Rather, communications better than usual. Early that year 12 artisans and laborers came up from Quebec to work at Huron Missions. (Parkman, *Jesuits*, 127 and 132.) Missionaries also came at different times. But 1634 was the very worst of years. “Hurons appeared at Three Rivers this year in small numbers and in a miserable state of dejection and alarm.” (*Ibid.*, 52.) Also the colony then in the chaos of its re-establishment.

(g) Butterfield’s argument from the message sent to the Hurons in 1635, is self destructive. The tribes were everlastingly making treaties between themselves and one of these being broken, the whites were appealed to; and as soon as possible Nicolet was sent to negotiate. This, infinitely more probable than that his treaty should have been broken, and war begun almost before he had started homeward.

tant countries, says that if he had gone three more days up a great river that leads out of Green Bay, he would have reached the Great Waters."

Why did this daring man turn back when he thus stood on the verge of so great a discovery? The reasons are not stated but may be readily surmised. He had been sent not as an explorer, but as an envoy to negotiate peace, and his mission was now accomplished. His time was evidently limited. Possibly, too, when his visions of Chinese mandarins and Asiatic pomp had vanished, the Wisconsin wilderness had lost its charms.

Nevertheless Nicolet deserves the highest honors. At a time when the English had hardly ventured a day's journey from the coast, this Frenchman had penetrated almost to the heart of the continent. He had lifted the veil of mystery that hung over the great West. That it so quickly fell again, was the fault of the times and not of Nicolet.

More than twenty years elapsed after Nicolet's journey before another white man reached Wisconsin. The fury of the Iroquois had put a stop to such distant expeditions. The ruin of the Huron missions had, for a time at least, par-

alyzed the missionaries. Trade languished on account of the war and the still more baleful influence of monopoly. The work of exploration and expansion was at a stand-still.

But in 1658 Radisson and his brother-in-law, Groseilliers, began their explorations. For two centuries nothing was known of their travels except through some obscure mention by contemporary writers. But Radisson had himself written an account for the use of the King of England, into whose service he had passed; and his manuscript, after passing through strange fortunes, was finally published in 1885. It is written in a curious style, such as might be expected from an unscholarly Frenchman struggling with the eccentricities of English speech; but at every point its truthfulness is manifest.

The travellers, after tarrying for a while among the Huron and Ottawa refugees on the Manitoulin islands, came to the Pottawattamies then dwelling on the islands at the entrance of Green Bay. Among them they wintered and the next spring proceeded to the Mascoutins, who still dwelt on the upper Fox river, where Nicolet had found them twenty years before. Radisson admiringly describes these Mascoutins as "a faire, proper nation; they

are tall and big and very strong." The savages, on their part, regarded the adventurer with mingled emotions of delight, amazement, and awe. They were astounded, above all else by the guns which they "worshipped by blowing smoke of tobacco instead of sacrifice."

These reverential savages carried Radisson in their canoes up and down the water-courses of Wisconsin, whithersoever he desired, and in this way, some time during the summer of 1659, he discovered the Mississippi river.

"We are fou rmonths on our voyage," Radisson writes,¹ "without doing anything but go from river to river. We met several sorts of people. By the persuasion of some of them, we went into ye great river that divides itself in 2, where the hurrons with some Ottanaks² and the wild men that had warrs with them had retired. . . . This nation (the Mascoutins) have warrs against those of the forked river. It is so called because it has 2 branches, the one towards the West, the other towards the South, w^{ch} we beleeve runs towards Mexico by the tokens which they gave us."

(1) *Voyages of Radisson*, 168.

(2) Hurons and Ottawas who had fled to an island in the Mississippi, above Lake Pepin.

After some other details Radisson gives an account of "that nation that lives on the other river"—evidently meaning the western branch, that is, the Missouri. This account is in some of its parts, quite mythical; but Radisson does not claim to have descended to the Missouri or to be here narrating except from hearsay. "This," he says, "I have not seene, therefore you may beleeve as you please."

But his description of what he did see, demonstrates that "the great river" on which he travelled, was the Mississippi. And if a doubt were possible, it would be set at rest by the description of Radisson's discovery given at the time by the Jesuits:¹ "A beautiful river, grand, wide, deep and comparable to our own great river, the St. Lawrence."

Radisson was alone on this voyage of discovery. "The summer I went a hunting," he writes,² "my brother stayed where he was welcome and put up a great deal of corne that was given him." But this inactive life of his brother, he says, brought on a fit of sickness; and some pages further on he ends his account of the discovery of the great river by saying: "When I came back I found my brother sick

(1) Margry, I, 54.

(2) *Voyages*, 158.

as I said before."¹ That this fact should have heretofore gone unnoticed must be ascribed to the amazingly entangled style of the careless young Frenchman.

The exploration of Radisson was fourteen years prior to that of Marquette. At that time there was no mission, not even another white man except Groseilliers west of the Alleghanies. Alone, unaided, with no resources save his own skill and courage, he found his way into the very depths of the wilderness and explored the great river a thousand miles above the point reached by De Soto and his army of Spaniards. Radisson will be famous when his achievement is understood.

The following year the two travellers returned to the St. Lawrence; and in the summer of 1661 set out on a new exploration. This time they proceeded to Lake Superior and skirted its southern shore until they reached Chequamegon Bay; thence they went five days journey in a south-east direction to the village of the Hurons. These unhappy refugees, driven westward by the Iroquois, had settled, some years before, on an island in the Mississippi above Lake Pepin, but they had been forced back by the Sioux and had now found

(1) *Ibid.*, 169.

a second asylum in the dense forests around the head waters of the Chippewa.¹ Among this poor people, the travellers were received like beings from another planet. There were great feastings and rejoicings in their honor. "We were demi-gods," says Radisson.

But soon winter set in with an extraordinary depth of snow. The Hurons, an agricultural people, were poor hunters at best, and now hunting was impossible. A frightful famine ensued. The wretched refugees, already a dispirited and demoralized people, succumbed almost without an effort to these new horrors. Their only food was the bark of trees or vines and old beaver skins dug out from the filth of their cabins. "We became the very image of death," writes Radisson. "Here are above 500 dead, men, women and children."

After two months the famine ended and life became less forlorn. Soon the travelers were visited by a large body of the Sioux who then occupied Northwestern Wisconsin and North-

(1) The village was nearer the mouth of Montreal river than to Chequamegon Bay (Radisson, *Voyages*, 193.) It was three days journey from Chequamegon and seven or eight from Green Bay, (Tailhau in Perrot, *Moeurs des Sauvages*, 240.) It was near a little lake about eight leagues in circuit.

ern Minnesota. The Sioux, gathered in council, said that they had come to make a sacrifice to the French, who were masters of all things. They asked for aid against their enemies, the Christinos, and pledged themselves to fidelity even unto death. Above all, they begged for guns. "The true means to get the victory," they said, "was to have a thunder."

The two explorers soon afterward visited the Sioux in their Minnesota homes and also the Christinos, living to the northwest of Lake Superior. Everywhere they were welcomed with that delight and awe which always characterized the first meeting of the red man with the white. Finally, late in the summer of 1662, they returned to the St. Lawrence with sixty canoes and furs to the value of 200,000 livres—the well-earned reward of splendid labors.

But the governor of the colony was bent upon robbing them. Even when they set out on their second journey of exploration they had been compelled, in order to escape his extortions, to slip away at mid-night like criminals bent upon some base design. His rapacity was now greatly increased by the sight of their riches; and they, becoming tired of his plun-

dering, fled to Boston and thence sailed for England.¹ There they were grandly received, became honored guests in lordly mansions, and Radisson married the daughter of Sir John Kirk. In 1667 the two explorers, at the head of an English expedition, sailed for Hudson's Bay and established trading posts there, with the design of drawing the rich fur trade of the Northwest away from Canada. They thus became the founders of the famous Hudson's Bay Company.

After a while, having quarreled with some of the officers of the company, they returned to the service of France, and in 1682 reappeared at Hudson's Bay, seized an English ship, captured their former associates and raised the French flag over Port Nelson.² But on their return to Paris, the English ambassador urgently entreated them to go back to England. Radisson's wife was still there and the two Frenchmen were soon persuaded³ to re-enter the English service. In 1684, they again sailed for

(1) *Colonie Francaise*, III, 311. *Lettre de Marie d'Incarnation*, 27 Aout, 1670. Groseillier's wife and children remained in Canada.

(2) *Rapport de M. de Meules au Ministre*, 4 Nov., 1683. *Collection de Manuscripts relatifs a la Nouvelle France*, II, 302-4.

(3) Neill. *Minnesota, Hist. Collections*, V. 414.

Hudson's Bay, lowered the lilies of France and hoisted the English flag, which ever since has floated over half the continent.

Radisson, reviewing these many changes, stoutly avers that he does not "in the least deserve to be taxed with lightness or inconstancy."¹ It matters but little: French despotism and an English wife are a full excuse for all such aberrations. This gay, rollicking Frenchman was a wise, brave, honest and great man. Few careers have blended so much of romance and solid service as his. The discovery of the Mississippi, the first exploration of Lake Superior, the founding of a vast commercial enterprise which for two centuries controlled half the continent—how many among the famous have done so much as this?

(1) *Voyages of Radisson*, p. 249. Also 241 and 250-3.

CHAPTER II.

GREEN BAY AND THE JESUIT MISSIONS.

1665-1672.

The ruin of the Huron missions did not cause the Jesuits to despair. Their first failure served only to open before them a wider horizon of duty, just as the night reveals what the day hides. The West was just then beginning to rise into view, and towards it the Jesuits turned as to a new land of promise. Thither they were also called by their duty to their Huron and other converts who, wandering about in exile, were in great danger of being wholly lost to the fold.

In August 1660, Father Menard set out for the West, and after frightful sufferings by the way, reached a settlement of the Ottawas at Keweenaw Point, on Lake Superior.¹ These fugitive Ottawas, of whom we shall hear much throughout this history, were now in the lowest depth of savage wretchedness. They had been driven from their old homes by the Iroquois, and the steps of their wandering had all

(1) *Verwyst. Missionary Labors of Marquette, Menard, etc.*, 176.

been steps downward. Misery had brutalized them; they had lost that self-respect which formed the sole basis of savage virtues. A year after Menard's visit, Radisson met them in the forests of Northern Wisconsin; and he describes them, as "the coursedst, unablest, the unfamous and cowardliest people that I have seen among four score nations that I have frequented."¹

Their treatment of Menard was most inhuman; they mocked at his teachings and at last drove him from their cabins. In the depth of winter he was forced to make such a shelter as he could out of a few pine boughs. There amidst winter blasts, snow-storms and the intensest cold—half famished too, with no food but acorns, bark and vile refuse—this feeble old man crouched from day to day, a living martyr.

Still this marvellous man did not murmur. "I can truly say," he wrote, "that I have more contentment here in one day than I have enjoyed in all my life in whatsoever part of the world I have been."²

The next June he started to establish a mission among the Hurons who, as we have seen,

(1) *Voyages*, 203.

(2) *Relation*, 1664, p. 6.

had found a refuge on the head-waters of the Chippewa. On the way he was deserted by his guides, but he pressed on until he had reached a point not very far distant from the Huron village. There he perished in the wilderness. The precise manner of his death has never been known. But in some way or other the old missionary gained his coveted crown of martyrdom.

Menard was thus Wisconsin's first missionary and her first martyr. In 1665 Allouez was sent to take his place; but in the meantime the Hurons and Ottawas had removed from the interior wilds to the head of Chequamegon Bay. Thither Allouez repaired, built a rude bark chapel and established the first mission in Wisconsin.

This place, where Radisson in 1661 had found only a solitude, had now become a rendezvous for the nations on the West. The Hurons and Ottawas had come first, attracted by the abundant fisheries and the opportunities for traffic. Other tribes had followed, some coming to trade and to fish, others as fugitives from the fury of the Iroquois who were then invading the West. Here were crowds of Sauks, Pottawattamies, Foxes and other tribes from Eastern Wisconsin as well as

large numbers of the dispersed and panic-stricken Illinois. "It is the center," writes Allouez, "of all the nations of that country."

Amidst these animated scenes, Allouez labored with ardor, but with uncertain success. He himself was sanguine. "God," he affirms¹ "found some of his Elect in every tribe while they were held here by fear of the Iroquois." The illustrious Marquette, who came afterwards, expressed himself less hopefully. But the work, whatever its value, was soon ended. The Iroquois, exhausted by constant fighting and curbed by the power of the French, ceased their invasions and the Western Indians returned to their homes. The Hurons and Ottawas remained, but in 1670 the Sioux drove them eastward just as the Iroquois, a few years before, had driven them westward. The missionaries followed their flock to the shore of Lake Huron. The short life of the mission of St. Esprit was over and Northern Wisconsin was once more a solitude.

It has long been noticed that there was a remarkable massing of Indian tribes along Green Bay and Fox river, in Wisconsin. But how great was this massing and how utter the con-

(1) *Relation*, 1667, p. 18.

trast between it and the desolation that about 1670, reigned everywhere else between the Alleghanies and the Upper Mississippi—has, so far as I know, never been pointed out.

When Marquette and Joliet journeyed down the Mississippi in 1673, they traveled almost the entire distance through an unbroken solitude. They met, indeed, one demoralized band of the Illinois who had fled from their homes and were temporarily encamped near the Mississippi, on its western side. But with this exception, in the long journey from the Wisconsin portage down to a great distance below the mouth of the Ohio—more than a thousand miles through the fairest portion of the continent—the travelers beheld only a tenantless waste, an unpeopled Paradise.

The great expanse stretching from the Mississippi, eastwardly, to the mountains, was virtually in the same condition. The Eries, who had inhabited the present state of Ohio, had been swept from the earth by the Iroquois. Michigan was also a solitude, except its northern part, where the Ottawa refugees and some of the Chippewas had gathered around the straits of Mackinaw and upon the shore of Lake Superior; its southern part had been occupied by the Mascoutins, but the most of

them had been destroyed by the Neutral nation and the rest driven to their kindred in Wisconsin.¹ Indiana had been the home of the Miamis, and a part of them were still roaming there; but the main body with the king of the confederacy at their head had emigrated to Fox river. Illinois was also a solitude, its former denizens having fled across the Mississippi, leaving their broad prairies, crowded with buffalo and game of every kind, as a hunting ground for the Wisconsin Indians. In Kentucky a few hundred Shawanoes roamed along the banks of the Ohio.² In fine, the six states lying east of the Mississippi and north of the Ohio—excluding Northeastern Wisconsin—contained a population in 1670, of less than twelve hundred warriors or eight thousand souls. There were three hundred thousand square miles of territory, rich in soil and in all things that contribute to human pros-

(1) Lalemant. *Relation des Hurons*, 1644. On Sanson's map they are placed in Southern Michigan. Parkman, *Jesuits*, 436. Note.

(2) La Salle, in 1682, counted the Shawanoes as 200 warriors. Parkman, *La Salle*, 296. I have estimated the Ottawas and Chippewas in Northern Michigan at 500 warriors—a very large estimate, as most of the Chippewas were then wanderers on the north shore of Lake Superior. The Miamis remaining in their old home, I have put at 500 warriors—also a large estimate.

perity; and yet this immense expanse was virtually a solitude.

Turning now to Northeastern Wisconsin we behold a wonderful contrast. Stretched along both sides of Green Bay and the Fox river as far south as Green Lake county was a territory about one hundred and thirty-five miles long and of an average width of thirty miles, which fairly teemed with human life. In the North, on the islands and along the eastern shore of Green Bay, were the Pottawattamies, a docile people, with a keen instinct for trade, who were seeking to become the middlemen in the commerce between the French and the tribes farther west; they numbered not less than five hundred warriors.¹ Across the bay were the Menominees settled upon the river of the same name, a brave but peaceful people—"very fine men," writes Charlevoix,² "the best shaped in all Canada." At the mouth of Fox river was a mixed village gathered from four

(1) Allouez. *Relation*, 1667,—narrates a visit of 300 of these warriors to Chequamegon Bay.

(2) Charlevoix, *Letters*, XIX, 202. Cadillac (*Memoire in Margry*, V, 121) is still more eulogistic. They were long at war with the Chippewas, but in the time of the French almost uniformly peaceable. Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes*, I, 304, and Shea, *Indian Tribes of Wisconsin*, Wis. Hist. Coll., III, 134.

or five different tribes; a little distance up the river were the Winnebagoes or "Men of the Sea," of whom we have already heard. The number of the Winnebagoes, the Menominees and the people of the mixed village could not have been less than six hundred warriors.¹ On the west side of the river, about four leagues from its mouth were the Sauks, who must have numbered at least four hundred fighting men.²

Passing through Lake Winnebago to the Upper Fox and its tributary the Wolf, we come to that famous gathering of tribes that were to bring such disaster upon the French Empire in the West. Some distance up the Wolf river were the Foxes, with not less than eight hun-

(1) No estimate of the numbers either of the Menominees or Winnebagoes is given in the 17th century. But in a Memoir of 1736 (*New York Col. Documents*, IX,) the Menominees are numbered at 160 warriors. But this Memoir is uniformly low in its estimates. Even the Iroquois are there counted as only 850 and the Illinois at 600, and the Miamis at 550; the real numbers, excepting those of the Illinois were perhaps twice as large. In this Memoir the Winnebagos are put at only 80 warriors; but this was after they had been decimated by famine and expelled from the state; in 1640 their great numbers are spoken of (*Margry*, I, 48). I have for these reasons increased the French estimate of 1736 by 50 per cent, for 1670.

(2) In the Memoir of 1736 they are put at 150 warriors—a low estimate even for that time, and then they had been decimated by the Fox wars. In 1763 Lieut. Gorrel put them at 350, as also Foxes. *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, I, 32.

dred warriors.¹ To the southwest of these, on the Fox river, was the great palisaded town where the Mascoutins and Miamis dwelt together in barbaric friendliness; farther on, enveloped in the wild rice marshes, were other towns of the Kickapoos and Mascoutins; all these tribes together could not have numbered less than the Foxes.²

Here then in this narrow strip of territory was a population of thirty-one hundred warriors or at least twenty thousand souls, nearly three times the number that roamed in the vast expanse of surrounding solitude. It was like an oasis in a desert.

What caused this wonderful massing of tribes? In the first place, the land was exceptionally rich in all essentials of barbaric plenty. Charlevoix declared that it was "the most

(1) *Relation*, 1667, estimated the Foxes at 1,000 warriors. *Relation* of 1670 at 400, on the first, hasty inspection. But the next year they are said to have 200 cabins, each containing five or ten families; so that the estimate of 1667 must have been nearer right than that of 1670. All the facts of their subsequent history also corroborate this.

(2) Perrot, *Mœurs des Sauvages*, p. 127, puts population of chief town of Mascoutins and Miamis at 4,000 souls. Allouez, *Relation*, 1670, at more than 3,000, at another time at 800 warriors. In the *Narrative of Occurrences*, 1695, *New York Coll. Docts.*, IX, 608. Frontenac puts the Foxes, Mascoutins and Kickapoos at 1,500 warriors. This does not include the Miamis, so that my estimate is very low.

charming country in the world.”¹ The lakes and rivers were full of fish and the forest of game; fuel was plenty; the soil was easy to till and yielded richly. But the crowning attraction, doubtless, was the wild rice marshes, offering an abundant harvest without any labor save that of gathering it in the autumn. There indeed, was the Indian Utopia.

Secondly, all the population excepting the Winnebagos were of the Algonquin stock and they were here admirably sheltered from the two great foes of their race, the Iroquois on the East, and the Sioux or Dakotas on the West. The approach on the one side was guarded by a great lake and the bristling rapids of Fox river; on the other side, were impassable swamps, deep forests and the winding mazes of a river enveloped in marshes. Thus this region offered peace as well as plenty to its inhabitants. “It is a terrestrial Paradise,” wrote Dablon; “but the way to it is as difficult as the way to heaven.” Savages, at least, could desire nothing beyond that—a paradise safely locked from one’s enemies.

The great gathering of the tribes along Green Bay and Fox river is thus easily explained. Consider now the commanding po-

(1) *Lettres*, XIX, 203.

sition occupied by this region between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi, making it virtually the key to the interior of the continent. Thus we already begin to understand why Wisconsin was to become the focus of the French struggle for supremacy in the West.

The instability of the mission at Chequamegon Bay had been manifest for some time before the final collapse; and the Jesuits had eagerly sought for some more permanent foundation on which to build. They were spurred on to such a work by the rising hostility against their order. Their prestige had greatly waned and many of the colonists were rebelling against their rigid rule. "For more than thirty years," writes Le Clerc,¹ "they have complained in Canada of the hampering of their consciences." The Jesuit missions which had once set all France aflame with enthusiasm, began to be sharply criticised. Talon, the intendant of Canada, wrote to Colbert: "I have reproached the Jesuits as courteously as possible with paying too little attention to the civilizing and education of the savages."² Stung by such reproaches and by still graver charges,

(1) Le Clerc, *Etablissement de la Foi*, II, 84.

(2) Margry, I, 79.

the disciples of Loyola sought for a new field where they might establish themselves firmly and reconstruct society according to the ideals of Jesuitism. Their choice, almost inevitably, fell upon the Green Bay region.

Allouez was sent to make a beginning. In December, 1669, he landed at the head of Green Bay, spent the winter in the vicinity and the next spring ascended the river to visit the Foxes and Mascoutins. Returning to the Bay he was joined in September by Dablon, the Superior of the Jesuit missions on the lakes. Having established the mission of St. Francois Xavier, the two Fathers went to labor among the Mascoutins. The journey over the Fox rapids was arduous. "But as a recompense for all our difficulties," Dablon writes, "we enter the most beautiful country that ever was seen; prairies on all sides as far as the eye can reach, divided by a river which gently flows through them, and on which to float by rowing is to repose one's self; there are forests of elms, oaks, etc.; vines, plum-trees, apple-trees are in abundance and seem by their appearance to invite the traveller to disembark and taste of their fruits," They saw also great clouds of wild-fowl floating over the harvest of wild-rice that

lined the river on either side. And game of every kind was so plentiful that it could be killed almost without an effort.¹

Paddling through this savage elysium, they reached the chief abode of the Mascoutins. It was a palisaded town standing on the crown of a hill about a league from the river bank; while all around the prairie stretched beyond the sight, interspersed with groves and belts of tall forest. The Mascoutins with the characteristic hospitality of the red man, had received the fugitive Miamis into their town. They had even accepted the Miami king as their ruler; and this potentate guarded day and night by a band of armed warriors, reigned over all with a pomp quite unparalleled in Indian politics.

On his previous visit Allouez had been received like one from the clouds,² and the reverence of the savages now was not abated. They listened with open ears, beset him night and day with questions, invited him and the Father Superior to unceasing feasts. Some were baptized. A cross was planted in the midst of the town, and three years afterward Marquette saw it still standing, decorated with deer-

(1) *Relation*, 1671, p. 43-44.

(2) *Relation*, 1670, p. 100.

skins, red-girdles, and other offerings to the Great Manitou of the French.

But the Foxes were not so complaisant. On his first visit to their town on Wolf river, Allouez had been extremely horrified. "They are a nation," he grimly observes, "renowned for being numerous; each man commonly has four wives, some six and others ten." The Foxes, on their part, "had had a very poor opinion of the French ever since two traders in beaver skins had appeared among them." Towards the new faith they maintained a judicial reserve. "They allow the majesty and unity of God," Allouez writes; "of the "rest they say not a word," An old man, the grand chief of the Foxes, thanked the missionary for his visit. "But as for these other things," he continued, "we have no leisure to speak; we are occupied in bewailing our dead."¹

On the second visit the Foxes proved still more obdurate. The year before some of their number had visited Montreal, and there had been shamefully abused by the soldiery;² and "now they were determined to avenge them-

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 98.

(2) Faillon, *Colonie Francaise*, III, 392. A vivid picture of the brutality of the soldiery. The Indians were often murdered for their furs, on their visits to Montreal.

selves for the bad treatment they had received in the French settlements." But Allouez armed himself with patience and with all the arts of Jesuitic wisdom. He exhibited highly colored paintings of judgment and eternal flames. "The parents," he remarks, "were happy to see their baptized children at the top of the picture, while they were horrified to behold the torments of the devils at the foot."

In another way the missionary availed himself of that master passion in the Indian's heart, his love of his children. With soft blandishments, Allouez first won the children to his side. "He sang to them spiritual songs with French airs which pleased them and their parents immensely. Then he composed certain canticles against the superstitions and vices most opposed to Christ. These he taught to the children by the sound of a soft lute, and went about the village with his little savage musicians, declaring war against the jugglers, the dreamers and those with many wives. And because the savages, passionately loved their children and suffered everything from them, they permitted the biting reproaches which were made against them by these songs."¹

(1) *Relation*, 1672, p. 39-40.

Gradually the Foxes succumbed. Sixty children and some adults were baptized; the whole village learned to make the sign of the cross. All revered the black-robed stranger as at least a mighty magician armed with a mysterious power, and possessed of more potent spells than had ever before been witnessed in the wilderness. One day a war-party were so wrought upon by the harangues of Allouez, that they daubed the figure of a cross upon their shields of bull-hide, before going to battle; they returned victorious, extolling the sacred symbol as the greatest of "war-medicines." This test convinced multitudes. It is the first recorded attempt to apply the scientific method to the verifying of religious truth.

The Jesuits rejoiced. "We have good hope" they said, "that we shall soon carry our faith to the famous river called the Mississippi and perhaps even to the South Sea." The missionaries had found favor in the eyes of all the tribes and a firm foothold had been gained amidst the only permanent population east of the great river. A central mission had been established at De Pere, five miles above the mouth of the Fox, with outlying stations among the various tribes. To be sure it was but a beginning; the central chapel was as yet

but a flimsy structure of bark. But as Dablon had said, "the way to heaven is as open through a roof of bark as through a roof of gold and silver."

Five years later a more substantial church was built, and within the palisaded enclosure of the mission were also dwellings, workshops and store-houses. Besides the two missionaries Allouez and Andre, there were also lay brothers and hired workmen, some employed in building, hunting, fishing, clearing and tilling the soil, others as blacksmiths, gunsmiths, and it would seem that there was even a silversmith there.² The western traders also, made the mission their rendezvous and stored their furs within its stockade. The scene was a rude and rough one, but the ardent missionaries saw in it the nucleus of a new Paraguay—another Jesuit empire rising in the wilds of North America.

(1) Margry, II, 251.

(2) Butler, *Early Historic Relics*, Wis. Hist. Coll., VII. 295.

CHAPTER III.

LA SALLE AND THE COUREURS DE BOIS.

1672 — 1683.

A little while after the establishment of the mission at Green Bay, Frontenac became governor of New France. The new governor seems to have set his heart chiefly upon two things: the one to harry the Jesuits, the other to monopolize for himself, so far as possible, the fur-trade of the West. "With the Jesuits," he declared,¹ "the conversion of souls is but a pious phrase for trading in beaver-skins;" and in another dispatch he affirmed,² "that the most of their missions are pure mockeries." As for the fur-trade, in order to monopolize that, he made use of several agents or secret partners, chief among whom was the celebrated La Salle.

Upon La Salle's career we wish to dwell only so far as it pertains to the history of Wisconsin. But such a glamour of romance has been thrown around his name by his impassioned admirers and his real relation to West-

(1) *Frontenac a Colbert*, Nov. 2, 1672. Margry, I, 248.

(2) *Ibid.*, Nov. 14, 1674. *Ibid.*, 250.

ern affairs has been so thoroughly misunderstood that our research must take a rather wide range.

La Salle was a fit agent for such a man as Frontenac. He was bold, unscrupulous, ready for anything that could help on his schemes. In hatred of the Jesuits, he surpassed even his master. La Salle's soul was surcharged with suspicions of everybody, but especially of the missionaries. Imaginary Jesuits dogged his footsteps everywhere; they tried to seduce him from the path of chastity; they encouraged his men to desert, soured the minds of the savages against him, thwarted his enterprises and plotted against his life.¹

It is not worth our while to inquire what basis of fact may have underlain these dreams of a disordered fancy. Humanity is sinful; and the Jesuits, it must be confessed, were human.

All of La Salle's hatred of the Jesuits converged upon the mission at Green Bay. He claimed for himself nearly the whole Mississippi valley by virtue of his alleged discoveries; but he laid special stress upon the right to the Wisconsin river. He had even protested against Du Lhut's—who was another secret

(1) Parkman, *La Salle*, 101-7.

partner of Frontenac—going by that route to trade with the Sioux. “If they go by the way of the Wisconsin where I have founded an establishment,” he wrote,¹ “they will ruin the trade, which is my chief reliance.” Therefore he was madly jealous of the mission at Green Bay through which the Jesuits controlled the chief water-way to the West and were seeking to build up a rival empire to his own. “They hold the key to the beaver-country,” he forlornly complained.

What rendered La Salle still more jealous was the fact that his own vast claims were utterly baseless. The only domain that he could really claim, by right of discovery, was the region of the Mississippi below the mouth of the Arkansas; and even that had been explored by the Spaniards more than a century before. To show any color of right to the country north of the Arkansas, he was driven to the most enormous fabrications.

In an account of La Salle's explorations written by a nameless friend of his and taken from his own lips, it is asserted that he made two journeys in 1669–71; the one down the Ohio nearly to its mouth, the other down the Illinois to the Mississippi and beyond. The story of

(1) Margry, II, 251.

the last journey is now coldly dismissed as false even by La Salle's most rapt admirer. But the claim to the discovery of the Ohio has heretofore gone unchallenged.

La Salle's own statement deserves no credit; for since one part of his story is confessedly false, the maxim, *falsus in uno*, must prevail. His claim, however, has seemed to have a real support in Joliet's map of 1674, on which the Ohio is laid down with an inscription to the effect that it had been explored by La Salle. But a closer scrutiny reveals that the route of La Salle has been drawn by a later hand, after the map was finished.¹ The only support therefore vanishes. And in a note below I have given some additional reasons for believing that La Salle's discovery of the Ohio was but another invention of his own unscrupulous brain.²

(1) Winsor, *Narrative and Critical History of America*, IV, 215. "The route of La Salle is seemingly drawn by a later hand and the stream is without the coloring given to the other rivers. In its course, too, it runs athwart the vignette surrounding the scale at the bottom of the map as if added after that was made."

(2) The account given both in the Paris memoir and in that to Frontenac is so absurdly incorrect as to prove that La Salle was only repeating reports gathered from the Iroquois amongst whom he wintered in 1669. The rapids at Louisville described as a very high fall and the great

Claiming almost the whole West by virtue of these pretended discoveries, La Salle in 1682 began to entrench himself on Rock St. Louis by the side of the Illinois river. In his wooden castle, on this formidable cliff, he was to reign as a feudal lord over half a continent, gathering the Western savages around him as his vassals. Wisconsin and the whole Upper Mississippi region were to become tributary to his

error as to their location, the "very large river" from the north flowing into the Ohio above the fall and the marshy country in which the river sinks and is lost below the fall, the six or seven leagues that separate Lake Erie from the Ohio, the twenty-four men who desert and flee some to New England and some to New Holland—it is wonderful that so many blunders and absurdities could be crowded into fifteen lines.—Parkman, *La Salle*, 23-4, gives both accounts without suspicion.

Perrot (*Mœurs des Sauvages*, 119-120,) says that in the summer of 1670, he met La Salle hunting on the Ottawa with a party of Iroquois. The account states that La Salle separated from the priests, Sept. 30, 1669, being then sick of a fever, made a visit to the Onondagas, thence made an exploring trip to the Ohio and return, of 800 leagues. Who can believe that all this took place in time for La Salle to go far north on the Ottawa for a leisurely summer hunt?

The manner of putting forth this claim—the long silence, the sudden assertion in 1677 and 1678, the subsequent silence—is proof enough. In the *Relation des Decouvertes*, 1681, it is stated that a violent fever obliged him to quit the priests at the beginning of their explorations, and there is not a hint of any subsequent journey of his own to the Ohio.—(Margry, II, 436.

ambition; the Jesuits at Green Bay were to be checkmated in their evil designs. "La Salle keeps in the background," Frontenac's successor wrote to the Minister, "with the idea of attracting the inhabitants to him and building up an imaginary kingdom for himself by debauching all the bankrupts and idlers of this country."

The scheme, according to his own assertions, prospered wonderfully. In a memorial to the king, he reports the number of Indians collected around Rock St. Louis at four thousand warriors, or more than twenty thousand souls. This great concourse of savages had fled to him for protection; organized by his genius and obedient to his will, they formed a mighty barrier to any future invasions of the West by the Iroquois. "The diplomacy of La Salle," writes his eloquent panegyrist, "had been crowned with a marvelous success."¹

But La Salle's claim is wholly fraudulent, and the only marvel about it is, that the fraud should have gone so long undetected.

In Franquelin's map of 1684, the colony is laid down in detail, the different villages located and the number of warriors in each village noted—all this information having been

(1) Parkman, *La Salle*, 297.

given by La Salle himself who had reached Quebec on his way to France, the autumn before the map was finished. On this map the Shawanoes are estimated at 200 warriors and the Illinois at 1200, the latter being doubtless greatly over-estimated. How now are the remaining 2600 made up? *By the extremely simple device of counting the same people twice.* The Miamis are first located as one body and their numbers estimated at 1300. Then the different tribes into which the Miamis were divided¹ — the Ouatensons or Weas, the Peanghichias or Piankeshaws, etc. — are separately located and their respective numbers assigned to each.

The trick is incredibly transparent. And there are other misstatements not quite so manifest. Only a part of the Miamis could have been with the colony, since a large body of them, including their king, were with the Mascoutins, at first on Fox river and then on the Wisconsin, from 1669 to 1690.² Their numbers are also exaggerated; since in 1736 — they having enjoyed peace and prosperity in the meantime — the whole nation was estimated

(1) Consult Shea. *Indian Tribes of Wisconsin, Wis. Hist. Coll.*, III, 134, on divisions of Miamis.

(2) *Relation*, 1671. La Potherie, II, 251.

at 550 warriors.¹ Again, the Illinois had long dwelt around Rock St. Louis, and La Salle, instead of collecting them there, had merely established his fort in their midst. In a word, a fraction of the Miamis and possibly two hundred Shawanoes—in all, perhaps seven hundred warriors—had temporarily located in the Illinois country. And this had been brought about not by La Salle's diplomacy, but by fear of an Iroquois invasion.

That such a trick should not have been detected in far-away Paris is not surprising; although it does almost take away one's breath to find La Salle coolly proposing, in a memorial to the king, to lead his four thousand imaginary Indians from Rock St. Louis to Mexico, promising with them to overthrow the Spaniards and to conquer an empire as large as half of Europe.² But it is wonderful that this fraud should have lived on for two centuries, that an eminent historian should have accepted it without suspicion and made it the chief factor in that preposterous glory which he was bent upon wreathing around the brow of La Salle. History holds few such examples of triumphant mendacity.

(1) *Enumeration of Indian Tribes N. York Col. Documents*, IX, 1052. But this is a very low estimate.

(2) Parkman, *La Salle*, 326.

La Salle's enterprise, although but a bubble of fraud, exerted a very malign influence by arousing the suspicions of the large Indian population massed in Wisconsin. Even before this the Foxes had become distrustful of the French; but now the eyes of the Mascoutins were opened and upon La Salle's first arrival among the Illinois in 1680, they sent their chief Monso to warn the latter people against the encroachments of the French.¹ La Salle, as usual, ascribed this interference to the intrigues of the Jesuit missionaries; with how much truth it would be difficult to say. But it is certain that from this time the two chief tribes of Wisconsin, the Foxes and Mascoutins, together with the Kickapoos became firm allies, united by a common sentiment of distrust and latent animosity toward the French.

But this rising distrust of the savages did not prevent large numbers of French traders or *coureurs de bois* from pressing forward into Wisconsin and other northern regions. These brave and hardy men were exposed to a double danger, the suspicions of the savages and the regulations of the fur trade. For, the royal edicts, in the interests of monopoly, prohibited

(1) *Ibid.*, 161-4.

the colonists from going into the wilderness to trade, under the heaviest penalties; for the first offense, whipping and branding; for the second perpetual imprisonment in the galleys.¹ But despite these severities and perils the flight westward went on year by year, in ever increasing numbers. As early as 1676, there were already in the woods nearly five hundred young men, "the best in Canada, besides others on the way."² Three years later there were eight hundred out of a total Canadian population of 10,000 souls. Canada was being rapidly drained of its best young blood. "There is not a family," the intendant Du Chesnau, wrote "of any condition or quality, whatsoever, that has not children, brothers, uncles and nephews among the *coureurs de bois*."³

Monopoly and despotism had made these men outlaws. But to accept outlawry under such conditions was an act of virtue and a proof of manhood. "The men," says a distinguished authority,⁴ "who have been driven

(1) *Lettre du Roi*, 30 April, 1681. *Coll. de Manuscripts*, I, 280. Also La Houtan, *Voyages*, I, 85-6.

(2) La Chesnaye. *Memoire sur le Canada*. *Coll. de Manuscripts*, I, 255. In Margry, VI, 3, this memoir is wrongly dated.

(3) *New York Coll. Documents*, IX, 140-152.

(4) Campbell, *Political History of Michigan*, 14-15.

to the forests by feudal oppressions and monopolies have assuredly been possessed of many useful qualities which a better government could have turned to a great advantage."

And as it was, they were of incalculable service to New France. The most faithful servants of the crown confessed it, while deploring the violation of the royal edicts. "No doubt," wrote Begon,¹ "the trade they carry on with the nations is advantageous to the colony. The French should carry to the savages all that they need lest they be attracted to the English, and thus the fur trade in Canada which is our main dependence would be ruined. The savages would also array themselves against us in the first war, as they always take the part of those with whom they trade."

The English were of the same opinion, and saw in these hardy voyageurs the chief promoters of French exploration and commerce. "We shall never be able to rancounter the French," wrote Livingston, the Indian commissioner of New York,² "except we have a nursery of bushlopers as well as they." It was manifestly true. For lack of just such a class,

(1) Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 309-310.

(2) *Report of Journey to Onondaga, N. Y. Col. Documents*, IV, 650.

the English even in 1750, had hardly found their way across the Alleghanies, while the French had pushed on to the base of the Rocky Mountains.¹

And yet these forest rangers have been savagely traduced even in modern times. The same eloquent historian who has clothed the sorry figure of La Salle in a halo of romance, describes the *courcurs de bois* as "standing examples of unbridled license," and as, "drunken rioters stalking about the streets as naked as a Pottawattamie or a Sioux." Doubtless there were wild spirits among so many men; but La Hontan, an eye-witness, does not paint their revelries in any such gross colors as the above; and he expressly adds that "many were married men who on reaching the settlements betook themselves quietly and soberly to the bosom of their families." The great fault of these men was that they had rendered themselves odious to the aristocrats and monopolists of Canada. "They swagger about like lords," complains the Marquis Denonville, "they despise the peasantry whose daughters they will not marry although they are peasants

(1) HARRISSE, *Notes sur la Nouvelle France*, 174—a generous tribute to the forest rangers.

() PARKMAN, *La Salle*, 166 and *Old Regime*, 312.

() *Voyages*, I, 31. *Letter VI. Montreal*, 14 *Juin*, 1684.

themselves." The French voyagers had, doubtless, many faults; their lives were thoroughly human admixtures of good and evil. But after all their chief crime seems to have been their love of liberty.

A bitter strife constantly went on between these out-lawed fur traders of the forest and men like La Salle, who were acting as secret agents of corrupt official rings that were striving to monopolize the trade of the West.¹ In this strife Wisconsin became the headquarters of the forest rangers, to whom the missionaries at Green Bay gave as much sympathy and support as they dared. Thus during the French dominion, the white population of Wisconsin came to be mainly made up of these gay and daring adventurers.² But all in all, the state need not be ashamed of these, her early pioneers.

(1) Gravier, *Cavelier de La Salle*, 75-77. This French panegyrist of La Salle describes his troubles and the rigors dealt out to the forest rangers as both due to the Jesuits.

(2) Mackinac was indeed their great rendezvous, but this was but the gateway to Wisconsin. La Motte Cadillac complained that his designs at Detroit were constantly thwarted by the opposition of the Jesuits and "of the people of Canada, because their great project is the establishment of Mackinac and the *coureurs de bois*." Also, *Lettre a Pontchartrain, Detroit*, Sept. 15, 1708.

CHAPTER IV.

NICOLAS PERROT—FRANCE TAKES POSSESSION OF THE WEST.

1689.

Small craft glide gaily into port while great ships have to wait for the rising tide. And thus it seems often to happen that small men sweep into distinction, while the great and the true stick on the sand-bars of history and have to bide their time. Only thus can one account for that strangely blended fate of oblivion and dishonor that has gathered around the name of Nicolas Perrot. And it is the chief joy of the historian—the full and almost sole reward for much delving in the dry and dusty records of the past,—if he may be able to help one such name onward into the place of honor where it really belongs,

Perrot, born in 1644, came at a very early age to the New World. The first years of his wilderness career were passed in the employ of the Jesuits; but about 1665, he began life for himself as a trader among the Indian tribes of Wisconsin. Thence he soon extended his travels throughout the Northwest.

In 1670, the French authorities determined to take formal possession of the West, with solemn and imposing ceremonies. They looked around for some one fitted, by his prestige among the Indians, to go as an envoy and gather the tribes in a grand assembly at Sault St. Marie, where the ceremonies of occupation were to take place.¹ "No one," writes Charlevoix, "was" better adapted for this important duty than Nicholas Perrot;² and he was sent. After dispatching messages to the tribes north of Lake Superior, he went in person to those of Wisconsin. His visit was crowned with success; and the next spring the young envoy returned to Sault Ste Marie at the head of a great fleet of canoes filled with the guileless barbarians who had come to surrender their land to the crown of France. When the assembly was convened, St. Luson—a non-entity of noble birth—acted as master of ceremonies; but Perrot had done the real work.

It is worthy of note that the proud Foxes were not at the council. They had a great friendship for Perrot and followed him as far as Green Bay, but there they turned back.

(1) Perrot, *Moeurs des Sauvages*. Tailhan's Notes, 258.

(2) *History of New France*, III, 165.

Not even he could persuade them to pay homage to the French.¹

Soon afterward Frontenac, the monopolist and the fierce foe of the Jesuits, was made governor of New France. Under such an administration there was no chance for Perrot, an honest man and—like all the great explorers, Nicolet, Radisson, Joliet²—a friend of the missionaries. During this period, therefore, Perrot lived in retirement.

But this blameless obscurity has given the opportunity for a frightful stab at Perrot's fame. The anonymous memoir which contains the lying account of La Salle's discoveries, also tells of an alleged attempt to poison him by a domestic in his service named Nicolas Perrot.

Even if it was declared that our famous voyageur was meant, the charge would not deserve serious attention; since it would have no support except an anonymous document full of falsehoods and calumnies. But no such declaration is made. It has been reserved for a modern historian to give currency to the charge.³ And so far as I know

(1) Perrot, *Memoire*, 127. (2) *Voyages of Radisson*, 175. A hearty defence of the Jesuits.

(3) Parkman, *La Salle*, 104. Even that acute critic, Dr. Butler, expresses himself doubtfully. *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, VIII, 205-6..

no attempt has ever been made to clear Perrot from the infamy thus cast upon him.

Thanks to a Canadian census list, we know something of Perrot at this period. It thus appears that about 1671, he married Madeleine Raclos, a young lady of good family and possessed of a considerable fortune; in 1681, he was living quietly, with his wife and six children, upon his estate.¹ Is it not absurd to think of him as La Salle's menial and a cut-throat to boot, who had been put in irons and publicly disgraced for having attempted to poison his master?

In 1683 the friends of Perrot returned to power and he was forthwith sent West to gather up the Indians for a campaign against the Iroquois. In 1685, he was made governor of the Northwest with headquarters at Green Bay. "I was sent to this Bay, "he writes," with a commission to command there and in the most distant countries of the West, and also in all those I might be able to discover."² He arrived at Green Bay just in time to mediate between the Chippewas and the Foxes, then on the eve of war; thence he hastened to the Mississippi to establish posts and make

(1) Tailhan in Perrot, *Memoire*, 331. Note.

(2) *Ibid.*, 156.

explorations in the countries beyond. But he had hardly reached Black River before winter set in. And here Perrot, who had an artist's eye for the picturesque, fixed his habitation not far from Mount Trempeleau, that solitary peak which rises like a rocky exhalation from the midst of the Mississippi.

The next season Perrot was recalled to again lead his Indians against the Iroquois. Before setting out on this campaign he presented to the little mission chapel at De Pere, a silver ostensorium—the pious offering of a brave and devout soul. This precious relic was dug up in 1802 near the site of the old chapel, and is now deposited with the Wisconsin Historical Society.¹

The campaign finished, Perrot hastened back to Green Bay, where there was urgent need of his presence. The long smouldering discontent of the Foxes and their allies was now bursting forth into open violence against the French. They were enraged by the establishment of the trading posts on the Mississippi by which their mortal enemies, the Sioux, were being supplied with munitions of war. Besides, they had suffered all manner of abuse and wrongs from the hands of the traders, as the

(1) Butler, *Early Historic Relics of the Northwest*. Wis. Hist. Coll., VIII, 195-206.

colonial authorities confessed. "The violence and brutality of the French have been carried to such extremes," Denonville, the governor-general, wrote in 1686, "that it is a wonder that the savages do not rise and slay them all."¹

The malign influence of La Salle also, had greatly aggravated these disorders. Claiming almost everything in the West, he had faltered at nothing in order to enforce his mad pretensions. "He had even ordered the savages," Charlevoix says,² "to plunder the goods of any one who had no commission from him." Out of this chaos of conflicting claims, violence and iniquity, came a natural result. In 1687 the Foxes, Kickapoos and Mascoutins conspired to pillage the French establishment at Green Bay in order to provide themselves with guns and other munitions of war. The plot was carried out, the mission chapel burned, everything valuable was carried off or destroyed.

Perrot was the chief sufferer. For his public services he had neither received nor expected any reward save the profits of his trade with the Indians. And, like all the merchants

(1) *Lettre a Seignelay*, 12 Juin, 1686. *Tailhan*, 312.

(2) *History of New France*, III, 246.

of the colony, ¹ he had for several years been greatly embarrassed on account of the Iroquois wars, which had prevented the carrying of furs to Montreal. A letter of his to one of his creditors has been preserved, the letter of an honest, high-minded man who struggles and hopes. But his goods were stored in the mission buildings at Green Bay; and now all had vanished in smoke and flame. According to Potherie ² "M. Perrot lost furs valued at forty thousand livres," a considerable fortune in those primitive times. After so many hardships and perils, and so many services rendered to the state, he was left penniless and in debt.

But the courage and serenity of Perrot were unfailing. Soon turning away from this scene of desolation, he hurried on to the Mississippi with a force of forty men. Winter was already at hand and ice had begun to form in Fox river. But daunted by nothing, he pushed forward until he reached Mount Trempeleau and there once more went into winter quarters.

The next season was a busy and prosperous one. Order was restored among the rebellious

(1) "Les marchands sont encore dans un e'tat plus d'e'plorable tout leur bien est dans le bois depuis trois ou quatre ans." *Letter of Champigny, Intendant of New France*, August 9, 1688.

(2) La Potherie, *Septentrionale Amerique*, II, 209.

tribes of Wisconsin. The Sioux were induced to move down from the north and fix their habitation around Lake Pepin. Fort St. Antoine was built on the eastern side of the lake, and a tributary post established near the mouth of the Wisconsin, where one Borie Guillot was placed in command. All the tribes being now at peace with each other and thoroughly loyal to France, everything had been prepared for the ceremony of occupation. And on the 9th of May, 1689, at Fort St. Antoine, Perrot, as commissioner for the king, formally took possession of the great Northwest.

Let us pause for a moment at the spot where this memorable ceremony was enacted. The site of Fort St. Antoine can be identified with sufficient certainty, as lying near the base of a lofty bluff on the eastern side of Lake Pepin, and about two miles below the present village of Stockholm.¹ In the rear the bluff rises precipitously, first covered with woods, then bare and sprinkled with black-mottled rocks, then its summit crowned with stately trees. In front, there is a gentle slope of fifty or sixty feet to the side of the lake. Then the clear

(1) Draper, *Early French Forts*. *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, X, 368-372.

and wide expanse of the waters walled in on the other side by another long line of lofty cliffs, steep, grim, regular as a rampart. It is a scene of marvelous beauty; above all, in mid-summer, when one looking across the silvery waters, beholds the gray top of the distant bluffs, flecked here and there by streaks of gold, where the great sun-burned harvest fields beyond are peeping down on the fair lake beneath.

Such is the setting of the scene. Of the ceremony of taking possession we have no record save the brief official minute signed by Nicolas Perrot, "commissioned to manage the interests of commerce among all the Indian tribes and peoples of the Bay des Puants, Nadouesioux, Mascoutins, and other Western nations of the Upper Mississippi, and to take possession in the King's name of all the places where he has heretofore been and whither he will go."¹ There are also subscribed to the document the names of Marest the Jesuit missionary, Borie-Guillot commandant on the Wisconsin, Le Sueur the afterwards noted explorer, and others less known to fame. Among the latter is one Jean Hébert, doubt-

(1) Wis. Hist. Coll., XI, 36.

less a scion of that Hebert family who were the first actual settlers of New France.¹

Whole chapters of history have been devoted to describing the pomp with which St. Lusson took possession for France of the rocky barrens around Sault Ste Marie and La Salle of the marshes which embosom the mouth of the Mississippi. But to the thoughtful mind, the quiet scene at Fort St. Antoine will far surpass them both in interest. St. Lusson and La Salle stood amidst uninhabited wastes, but Perrot, at Fort St. Antoine, stood at the centre of the continent, close to what were to be its richest gardens and harvest fields. The date itself was a memorable one. A few weeks before William and Mary had ascended the English throne and the English Revolution had thus been brought to its triumphant close. That date has been universally accepted as the turning-point in the career of Louis XIV. and of European despotism. It seems like a stroke of supernatural irony that that very time should have been chosen for the planting of the standard of this waning despotism in the heart of that continent which above all others had been reserved for liberty.

(1) Parkman. *Pioneers of New France.*

In 1690, Perrot was once more in Quebec whence he returned to Wisconsin charged with high civil duties. He went as an envoy, with presents and messages, to the nations of the Northwest, seeking to dissuade them from the alliance which they were on the eve of concluding with the Iroquois and the English.¹

While employed upon this commission he discovered the lead mines which so long went by his name. Traveling on the Wisconsin, he was met by a delegation of Miamis who brought him presents of beaver skins and a specimen of lead ore from a rivulet flowing into the Mississippi; and in compliance with their request he soon after built a trading establishment across the river from the mines, probably not far from the site of Dunleith.² Thence he hastened to Fort St. Antoine to mediate between the Sioux and the Wisconsin tribes, once more in a hostile mood; then back again to his new establishment among the Miamis. Next, he is heard of as commanding in Western Michigan, but soon returned to Wisconsin.³ Thus year after year passed in an endless round of private cares and public duties.

(1) *Collection de Manuscripts, Canada*, III, 495.

(2) *La Potherie*, II, 260.

(3) Still, however, retaining his command in Michigan, according to Tailhan, 330.

Life, for him, bristled with strange perils. As a mediator between warring tribes, he was always liable to fall a victim to the jealousies, the suspicions, the phrensy of the infuriated savages amidst whom he flung himself. In 1692 the Mascoutins inveigled him into their town, robbed him of all his merchandise, condemned him to death as a sorcerer and led him to "the place of fire;" but he escaped almost miraculously.¹ Four or five years later, the Miamis accused him of aiding their enemies, robbed him of everything, bound him to the stake, from which at the last moment he was rescued by his ever faithful friends, the Foxes.² Still Perrot clung to the wilderness, fascinated by its very perils and undesponding despite so many disasters.

But in 1699 his career was summarily closed. The king issued an order absolutely suppressing all licenses, commanding the evacuation of the Western posts and recalling all traders and soldiers to the St. Lawrence. This sweeping proclamation was a death blow to the hopes of Perrot. Shut out from the employment of his life-time, without resources, harassed by his creditors, he was condemned to an old age of

(1) *La Potherie*, II, 284-6.

(2) *Lettre de Frontenac*, 15 Sept., 1697, 331. Also *La Potherie*, II, 343, and Charlevoix.

poverty and humiliation. In vain the colonial authorities appealed to the king in his behalf. "He is very poor and very miserable," wrote Callieres, the governor;¹ "large sums are justly due him for his services to the colony." But such homely virtues as justice and gratitude did not thrive amidst the splendid vanities of Versailles.

The savages, however, although they did not love their enemies, never forgot a friend. In the great council of the Indian tribes held at Montreal in 1701, the Foxes complained bitterly about the removal of Perrot; "we have no more sense," said the honest savages, "since he has left us."² The Ottawas for once were agreed with the Foxes and earnestly re-echoed the demand for his return.³ "He is the most highly esteemed," declared the grand chief of the Pottawattamies, "of all the Frenchmen that have ever been among us."⁴

Nevertheless, this tried servant of the crown languished in neglect and poverty. During these years of inaction he wrote his *Memoir* upon the Indians and other works—not in the highest style of literary art, but keen and

(1) *Lettre de Callieres*, 1702.

(2) Charlevoix, V, 144. Tailhan, 267.

(3) *Ibid.*, V, 153. La Potherie, IV, 257.

(4) La Potherie, IV, 213.

honest—the best original sources for the history of the French Rule in the West, especially in Wisconsin, during the latter part of the 17th Century. 'His last work was a memoir addressed to the colonial authorities, about 1716. It was an appeal, not for himself, but for a wiser and humaner treatment of his old friends, the Foxes, then just beginning that tremendous revolt which was to prove so disastrous to the French Dominion. With this kindly and characteristic act, the bowed figure of Perrot vanishes from the dimly lighted stage of Western History.

The withdrawal of the garrisons and traders from the West at the close of the century does not indicate any feeling of weakness on the part of the French, but rather of strength. Universal peace was now dawning, and the time seemed ripe for thoroughly carrying out what had always been the favorite policy of the French government. The trade of the Northwest was to be concentrated at Montreal. A few tribes, that had fully proved their docility and submissiveness, were to be installed as middlemen between the French and the more independent nations of the interior. Chief among these intermediaries were to be the

Hurons, Ottawas, Pottawattamies and Chippewas—all people that had been ground into subjection by exile, misery and constant contact with the whites. The first three tribes named have already been sufficiently noticed, the last demands a moment's attention.

The Chippewas, according to their own traditions, had dwelt in Northern Wisconsin for ages before the coming of the white man. We cannot stop to tell the strange story of their flight eastward; suffice it that about 1640, the French found them crouching around Sault Ste. Marie whither they had been pursued by the Sioux.¹ In the next decade, as we have seen, the Hurons and Ottawas, fleeing from the wrath of the Iroquois, had sought an asylum in these deserted Wisconsin forests, but they too, were finally put to flight by the Sioux. Then the exiled Chippewas began to creep back to their old homes; as early as 1676, some of them were settled on Chequamegon Bay;² and before many years the most of the nation had returned, building their council-house and relighting their sacred fire at Madeleine Island.³ For a

(1) Margry, I, 46.

(2) *Memoire sur le Canada. Collection de Manuscripts*, I, 252.

(3) Bronson. *Early History of Wisconsin. Wis. Hist. Coll.*, IV, 232.

time there was much warfare with the Sioux, but finally the interests of trade prevailed over hereditary hate;¹ about 1695, a firm friendship was established between the two nations;² and henceforth the Chippewas prospered abundantly as brokers for the savage multitude beyond the Mississippi.

The commerce which thus united the French and the Indians had its main-spring in the eagerness of the latter for guns and amunition. The savages saw—what our modern historians have strangely failed to see—that their strength, their ability to cope with their rivals, their very existence depended upon their possession of the white man's weapons.

History and romance have united to exalt the Iroquois, for instance, above all other American savages. The Iroquois, we are told, were wiser and braver than the rest; their political organization was of a higher type; their skulls, it is gravely asserted,³ had a greater admeasurement. It is an old fault of this giddy world to thus mistake luck for merit.

(1) Warren. *History of the Ojibways*. *Minn. Hist. Coll.*, V, 163-7.

(2) *New York Col. Documents*, IX., 609. Le Sueur, to promote this peace, was sent to build a fort on the Mississippi above Lake Pepin.

(3) Parkman. *Jesuit Missions*. Introduction.

The fact is that the Iroquois had been driven from their old homes on the St. Lawrence¹ by the superior prowess of the Algonquin tribes.² In the latter part of the sixteenth century, they fled to New York and there they were soon lavishly supplied with guns by the careless and irresponsible Dutch traders at Albany.³ The French, on the contrary, for a long time refused to furnish guns to their Algonquin and Huron allies;⁴ and so the Iroquois soon rose from the role of refugees to that of conquerors over other races as yet unarmed. Thus fully equipped for battle they easily crushed the Hurons whom the frugal French had supplied with hardly anything but iron kettles and missionaries. Almost without an effort the Iro-

(1) Hale. *Book of Iroquois Rites*, 10. Also Le Jeune, *Relation*, 1636. "Les sauvages m'ont montre quelques endroits ou les Iroquois ont autrefois cultive la terre." Also, La Chernage, Ferland, Sulte, etc.

(2) "La superiorite des Algonquins se manifesta des les premieres rencontres," etc. Sulte, *Melanges d'Histoire*, 190.

(3) *Journal of New Netherlands*. N. Y. Col. Docs., I, 179. The Dutch supplied the Mohawks alone with 400 guns. Also, Parkman, *Jesuits*, 212.

(4) Ferland, *Cours d'Histoire du Canada*. "Le Francais enterent pendant longtemps de fournir des fusils a leur allies." *Memoire*, 1676, in Coll. de Manuscripts, I, 254. "Le grand nombre (Algonquins) ne fut arme que de fort longtemps apres que les Hollandois eurent arme les Iroquois."

quois also annihilated the defenseless Eries; but for a long time they were defied by a mere handful of the Andastes who had been armed by the Swedes of Delaware. The Illinois fought with bows and arrows; and of course, they were driven before the armed Iroquois like chaff before the wind. And so everywhere it was bullets, not excess of brains or of bravery that made the Iroquois triumphant.

CHAPTER V.

THE BETRAYAL OF THE FOXES.

1700-1712

When the eighteenth century opened, the French Empire in America was at the flood-tide of its prosperity. But let us be sure that we understand the policy upon which that prosperity was based. The French did not design to make settlements in the West. The few forts were slightly garrisoned, and hardly more than palisaded trading posts; nothing was permitted that might awaken the jealousy of the Indians. The savages were to be left in undisturbed possession of the whole vast domain, on condition that they allowed the French to control the continent and to monopolize its trade.

“France,” wrote the English governor of Canada, Sir Guy Carleton, in 1768, “did not depend on the number of her troops, but on the discretion of officers who learned the language of the natives, * * * distributed the king’s presents, excited no jealousy and gained the affections of an ignorant, credulous but brave people, whose ruling passions are independence, gratitude

and revenge."¹ It was a wise policy and had been crowned with signal success. At the beginning of the century the Indian nations were at peace with each other and with France. Even the Iroquois, who for more than eighty years had nursed the fiercest hatred of the French, were at last reconciled and henceforth maintained an unquiet neutrality in the great struggle for the possession of the continent. The destiny of America seemed already decided. Protestant England held a narrow strip along the Atlantic coast, but the lilies of France floated without opposition over the entire expanse from Quebec to the mouth of the Mississippi and from the Alleghanies almost to the base of the Rocky Mountains.

But already there were the mutterings of a distant storm along the horizon. The curse of Canada was the spirit of monopoly. The commerce of the colony was at the mercy of a vast trading corporation; the bold, enterprising *courcurs de bois*, despite their great services to the crown, were hunted down as outlaws; corrupt rings formed by the chief officials at Quebec added the burden of their rapacity and extortion; above all, because the same system of

(1) Report to Lord Shelburne, March 2, 1768 in *Canadian Archives*, 1887.

monopoly and restriction prevailed throughout France, the prices of French merchandise were ruinously high. The consequence was that the English traders, less absurdly fettered, could offer the Indians three or four times more for their furs than the French could. One beaver skin, according to a French memoir of 1689, would buy at Albany eight pounds of gunpowder, at Montreal only two; or forty pounds of lead at the one place against thirteen at the other; or six times as much of the indispensable brandy, and other goods in similar proportions.¹

The savages were not slow to discover this difference, and they began to chafe under the yoke of French monopoly and extortion. Even those humblest vassals of France, the Ottawas, became restless; and Perrot says that they were at heart traitors to the crown.² The discontent spread. In 1706 M. de Vaudreuil, Governor General of New France, declared that the cheapness of English goods was the Gordian knot and chief difficulty in all the Indian troubles. "The English," he writes mournfully, "give powder and lead exceedingly low. The French government must some-

(1) *Collection de Manuscripts*, I, 476.

(2) Perrot, *Memoire*, Notes, 314.

how manage to do the same or all will be lost."

But the French held all the avenues of trade; they managed their savage vassals with infinite address; the most skillful politicians in the world, they humored the weakness and gained the favor of the people whom they were bent upon plundering, and whatever discontent was felt by the Indians went no further than muttered complaints and occasional outbursts of childish fury. One nation, however, — the Foxes of Wisconsin—was an exception. Their discontent flamed into a resistance which grew all the fiercer amidst the most frightful calamities and distresses. And this fire of Fox resistance did not burn itself out until the French empire in the west had become a mere shell, ready to fall into ruins.

It has been customary to explain the enmity of the Foxes against the French as excited by the machinations of the English and the Iroquois; but the facts do not in the least support this theory. The resentment began, as we have seen, with their first meeting with the French, and at a time when they, like all the western nations, were at war with the Iroquois. It continued—and in fact did not rise into its fiercest fury—until long after the Iroquois had

made peace with the French. It was a hatred spontaneously springing up in the breasts of a people passionately fond of independence and wise enough to foresee the results of French domination. Other Algonquin nations—Hurons Ottawas, Illinois, etc. — cowed and crushed by the Iroquois and their guns, had flung themselves under the protection of the French; the Foxes, on the contrary, haughty and untamed, had received them at first with suspicion and dislike, at last with undying hatred.

So early as 1694, the French were made aware that the Foxes were secretly hostile. In that year, Perrot, with ten or twelve canoes filled with deputies from the different Wisconsin tribes, made the long journey to Montreal to have an interview with the governor. Fox deputies were with the rest, but as if feeling that they were distrusted, they had engaged a Pottawattamie chief to speak for them in the council. But this very chief afterwards came privately to the governor and denounced his clients. "Put no faith," said he "in the Foxes. They are a proud people; They despise the French and all other nations also; they have a bad heart, and the Mascoutins have a still worse heart than they." Oth-

ers gave the same warning. Last spring, so Frontenac was told, the Foxes had some Iroquois prisoners presented to them by the Ottawas, but they had spared the captives to use them in negotiating with the enemy.

Frontenac was also informed that the Foxes were planning a singular and suspicious enterprise. They had resolved to forsake their country. Already through fear of a Sioux invasion, they had left their villages and dispersed far and wide through the forests. But they expected to return after a while to secure their harvests. Then they would seek a new home on the banks of the Wabash or the Ohio.

Frontenac felt that this was indeed a grave peril. The Foxes, he wrote to the king, are a fierce and discontented people in secret alliance with the English. If they remove to the Wabash with their affiliated tribes, the Kickapoos and Mascoutins, they will form there a nation of 1500 warriors. Far away from their enemies the Sioux, and in close contact with their Iroquois and English allies, they will prosper as never before. Other Indian malcontents will gather around them. They will become a great people holding the key to the valley of the Mississippi. The fur-trade will pass into the hands of the English, and French supremacy in the West will be at an end.

The Foxes, for reasons not necessary to dwell upon, put aside at that time their project of emigration eastward. But eighteen years afterward the plan was revived and carried into execution. In the meantime the French, in order to shut the English out from the Upper Lakes, had established a fort at Detroit, and around it they had induced their ever faithful vassals, the Pottawattamies, the Hurons and a part of the Ottawas to settle. And in the year 1712, the Foxes, Mascoutins, Kickapoos, and a part of the Sauks, forsaking their land of beauty and abundance along the Fox river, wended their way to the new establishment on Detroit river.

The French official reports pretend that the Wisconsin Indians, being in secret alliance with the Iroquois and the English had come to Detroit with the express purpose of besieging the fort and reducing it to ruins; and their statement has heretofore been unsuspectingly accepted by all historians.¹ But there is little doubt that the charge is a shameful falsehood. The Fox Indians had rendered themselves very obnoxious to the French. Firmly lodged on

(1) Bancroft, II, 383. Smith, *History of Wisconsin*, 91. Lanman. *History of Michigan*, 42. Strong, *Wisconsin Hist. Collections*, VIII, 242.

the Fox River they controlled the chief highway to the West; a haughty, independent and intractable people, they could not be cajoled into vassalage. It was necessary for the success of the French policy to get them out of the way. They were enticed to Detroit in order that they might be slaughtered.

The proof seems direct and conclusive. In the *Collection de Manuscripts relatifs a la Nouvelle France* published recently by the Canadian government, it is declared that La Motte Cadillac, the first commandant at Detroit, "wishing to draw the commerce of all the nations to his post, had sent belts to the Mascoutins and Kickapoos to invite them to settle there and that they having accepted the offer, came and built a fort at the place which had been assigned them." The Memoir containing this is contemporaneous with the events and of high authority.¹

Father Marest, Jesuit missionary, in a letter to the Governor General, De Vaudreuil, dated June 21, 1712, states that the French were the first movers in the war, having joined with the Ottawas to destroy the Foxes. This is the declaration of an unprejudiced witness, writing in a semi-official way to the very man who,

(1) *Coll. de Manuscripts*, III, 622, seq.

above all others, would know the truth or falsity of the charge.¹

Even the official report of Du Buisson, temporarily commanding at Detroit during the siege, contains statements strangely overlooked, which disclose a plot to destroy the Wisconsin Indians. "The Indians said in the council," writes Du Buisson, "that they knew the desire of the governor to exterminate the Foxes." "And just as soon as the siege was over," he adds in another place, "the allies set out for Quebec to get the reward which they say, Sir, that you promised them."²

Nor does the Governor General himself, pretend, in his despatches to the Colonial Minister, that the Wisconsin Indians had come to Detroit with any hostile designs. On the contrary, he lays the whole blame on the Indian allies of the French. "Saguima did it all. He not only destroyed many in their wintering place, but having found means to win over almost all the other tribes, pursued these unfortunate people as far as Detroit, and there killed or captured nearly a thousand of both sexes."³

Finally: on the very face of the accounts of

(1) Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 299.

(2) Smith, *History of Wisconsin*.

(3) *New York Coll. Documents*, IX, 863.

the siege, given both by Du Buisson and Charlevoix, it is manifest that the Wisconsin Indians had not come for war. They reached Detroit early in the spring; the Indian allies of the French did not arrive until the 11th of May. During all the intervening time the fort was virtually defenseless, being garrisoned by only twenty Frenchmen. Then, if ever, would have been the time for the Foxes to have destroyed Detroit. But they waited tranquilly until Du Buisson, had had time to send forth runners as far as the Illinois river and even to the banks of the Missouri, to gather in his allies. When all had gathered the pretended siege of Detroit began.

The French opened fire upon the unsuspecting Foxes. The latter, overwhelmed with surprise, cried out indignantly: "What does this mean? My father! You invited us a little while ago to come and settle around you and now you declare war against us. What have we done? But we are ready. Know ye that the Fox is immortal." And with this yell of defiance the betrayed savages retreated behind their palisades.¹

The valor of the Foxes was a terror to all.

(1) *Collection de Manuscrits relatifs a la Nouvelle France*, III, 623.

And although the French Indians were there in overwhelming numbers—Hurons, Ottawas, Pottawattamies, Illinois, even tribes from the Missouri and the Menominees from Wisconsin—they did not dare to attack the enemy in his stronghold. They preferred to fight at a safe distance, hoping to reduce the Foxes by famine and thirst. The battle went on for days. The French built two rough scaffolds about twenty-five feet high from which they poured such a galling fire day and night that the Foxes were cut off from their supply of water. Tormented by thirst and by hunger—for their provisions were almost exhausted—they were still as haughty and defiant as ever. To taunt the French, they raised rude flag-staffs above their camp and ran up red blankets as their colors, shouting: “We have no Father but the English.”

The French allies on their part, were zealous for France and the Catholic faith. “The English,” so they shouted back, “are cowards; they destroy the Indians with brandy and are enemies of the true God.” It was a veritable crusade—a battle of religion against the impious Foxes, who had flung the red flag of England and heresy to the breeze.

The Foxes, ready to perish with hunger and thirst, began to make desperate sorties. Once they swept all before them and gained a lodgment in a house near the fort where they fortified themselves; but the French cannon, at such close quarters, ploughed through and through the frail structure, and its defenders were finally forced to retire. Then they wished to negotiate; but their proposals not being listened to, they made another tremendous onslaught. This time they shot up hundreds of blazing arrows which fell upon the thatched roofs of the houses and set them on fire; the whole town and the fort would soon have been destroyed if the French had not checked the flames by covering the roofs with wet skins. Amid the smoke and flames the savages fought hand to hand, yelling like demons, their faces hideous with paint and fury, their tomahawks dripping with blood.

At last the French Indians became discouraged and wished to go away. "We shall never conquer these people," they said. "We know them well, and they are braver than any other people."

Du Buisson, seeing himself about to be deserted, prepared to sail away to Michillimack-

inac. But before surrendering Detroit, he made one more effort; gathering his confederates in council, he tried to revive their drooping courage; he appealed to their hatred of the Foxes and loaded them down with presents until he "had given away everything he had." But all this would have availed nothing if treachery had not come to his aid. A part of the Sauk tribe had come with the other Wisconsin Indians, and they now deserted to the French, telling a frightful story of what was going on in the camp of the enemy. "The Foxes," they said, "are worn out with famine, sickness and constant fighting; great numbers have already fallen. More than eighty dead bodies are now lying unburied in the camp; the air is filled with a horrible stench; pestilence abounds." When the French Indians heard all this, their courage rose and they were eager for battle. The story of the deserters was too true. The unhappy Foxes had now lost all hope of successful resistance, and they soon raised the white flag of surrender. Pemoussa, their great war chief, spoke like a genuine hero. "Do not believe," he said, "that I am afraid to die. It is the life of our women and children that I ask of you." But the French refused even this, and the Foxes, de-

spairing but defiant, withdrew again into their entrenchments.

Fortune came at last to their rescue. One night there was a heavy rain-storm, and under cover of its darkness, the Foxes slipped silently away. The fight had lasted for nineteen days.

Next morning, the French confederates balked and furious, set out in hot pursuit. Twelve miles above Detroit they came up with one division of the Foxes who had encamped by the side of Lake St. Clair. "Not perceiving the enemy's entrenchments," the French expected to find an easy prey, and with yells of triumph fell upon the fugitives like wolves upon a flock of sheep. Being driven back in disorder, they began a new siege with great caution. The Foxes fought bravely, but hopelessly; they were hemmed in upon every side, either by the lake or the enemy; the French cannon, which had been brought up from Detroit, battered down their weak defences and finally on the fifth day of the second siege they surrendered at discretion.

No mercy was shown. "The allies and the French," writes¹ Charlevoix, "commenced a deadly slaughter, destroying all the warriors

(1) Charlevoix, *History of New France*, V, 265.

except about one hundred and fifty, who, with the women and children, were distributed as slaves among the Indians; but the latter did not keep them long for they were all massacred before they separated." The slain, according to the statements of Charlevoix and Ferland, numbered two thousand souls;¹ one thousand, according to the exculpatory and wholly unreliable report of Du Buisson, the French commander. Certain it is that not a man, woman or child who fell into the hands of the enemy was permitted to live.²

The dark annals of Indian history record nothing quite as black as this transaction, begun in vile treachery and ending in unpicturable horrors. The lovely nights of early June, the tranquil lake, the forests newly robed in beauty—all this was lighted up by hundreds upon hundreds of fires, at each of which some man, woman or child, was being slowly burned to death. No wonder that the French were not willing to assume all the responsibility for this affair at Detroit. "It is God," writes the commandant, Du Buisson, "who has suffered these two audacious nations to perish."

(1) Ferland, *Cours d'Histoire du Canada*, II, 388.

(2) Report to M. de Vandreuil. Smith, *Documentary History of Wisconsin*.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GAUNTLET TAKEN UP.

1712 — 1716.

But the Wisconsin Indians were by no means so nearly exterminated as the French authorities had fondly dreamed. "Although the number of the dead is very great," wrote the missionary, Marest,¹ "the Fox nation is not destroyed." According to his estimate there still remained about Green Bay, four hundred good warriors, besides others scattered in the great flight. Nor had the slaughter at Detroit broken the spirit of these indomitable savages; it had only deepened their old dislike of the French into a grim, undying hatred. Even the next year the governor and the intendant complain to the Minister at Paris that "the Fox Indians are daily becoming more insolent."²

Disaster however had disciplined these wild warriors. Henceforth they will be more conciliatory in their intercourse with surrounding

(1) *Letter to M. de Vaudreuil*. Sheldon, *Early History of Michigan*, 299.

(2) *Letter of De Vaudreuil and Begon*, Nov. 15, 1713. *Abstract in Canadian Archives*, 1886, p. XLIV.

nations, seeking far and wide for helpers and friends in the great struggle to which they had devoted themselves. The first fruits of their new policy was an alliance with the Sioux, with whom they had been at war from time immemorial. But in 1714 the two nations had joined hands against the Illinois, the wards and abject servants of the French. No great expedition was organized; war was waged by piecemeal. Some young warrior, eager for glory, would gather around him a band of comrades and sally forth out of the forests of Northern Wisconsin, across the prairies, to surprise the Illinois in their villages or to fall upon them in their hunting parties. If the warriors succeeded, they came back in triumph, waving their trophies and shouting their battle songs; but if they failed, they returned as men disgraced, waiting on the outskirts of the village until the dead of night and then stealing, silent and crestfallen, into their cabins.¹ But in either case the war went on.

Thus blow after blow fell upon the Illinois. Charlevoix has indeed exaggerated or rather anticipated events when he says that so early as 1714 these Indians were driven from their old homes on the Illinois river, never to return.²

(1) *Wisconsin Hist. Collections*, III, 446.

(2) *History of New France*, V. 309.

So late as 1722 one tribe still clung to their famous stronghold, Rock St. Louis; but the rest had fled far southward and had settled under French protection on the Kaskaskia.

The French authorities became greatly alarmed. The policy by which all the nations of the West were to be marshalled as retainers and supporters of a great French Empire stretching across the continent, was about to be defeated by the stubborn and bitter hate of a single tribe. The Foxes were allying with themselves not only the tribes of Wisconsin, but the Sioux and other distant peoples. By their settlement on Fox river they were masters of the chief channel of communication between the East and the West; by driving the Illinois off from the river of the same name they were gaining almost complete control of the only other great highway. Communications were becoming very difficult. Travellers to and fro were always at the mercy of the Foxes; many were plundered and killed. The vast but fragile Empire of New France was almost split asunder by these implacable savages of Wisconsin.

Various means of meeting this danger were suggested. It was even proposed to sweep away the old commercial system with its mo-

nopolies, restrictions and exactions. In 1714 the governor and the intendant of the colony wrote to the colonial minister that "trading must be made free for a few years at least,"¹ Such a policy, adopted, not for a few years, but permanently, would have changed the whole future of the colony; the rising discontent of the Indians would have been overcome; their affection for the French maintained. New France, already entrenched in the fairest portions of the West and commanding all its chief avenues of trade, would have entered upon a boundless prosperity and her supremacy over the continent been assured for ages to come. But the proposal was too revolutionary, too subversive of all the traditions of French despotism; and although suggested again and again,² met with little favor from the court.

Instead of this, it was proposed to again attempt the extermination of the Foxes. In vain, the wisest and most experienced people of the colony protested against a policy so brutal and so foolish. Perrot, who for half a

(1) *De Vaudreuil and Begon to the Minister, Sept. 20, 1714. Canadian Archives, 1886, XLIV.*

(2) A letter of De Vaudreuil and Begon, Oct. 14, 1716, contains a draft of proposed measures for freedom of trade—not to begin before Jan. 1, 1718. *Can. Archives, 1886, XLVII.*

century had been better versed than any other man in the affairs of the West, defended the Foxes and presented a memoir in their favor to the Governor General. Although now past seventy years of age, he offered to once more brave the hardships of the wilderness in order to treat with the savages who still had a perfect trust in the one Frenchman who had never betrayed their confidence. "If I had gone with De Louvigny," he said afterwards, "I would have made peace with the Foxes without fighting or bloodshed."¹

But folly prevailed. And on the 14th of March, 1716, an expedition led by a brave and tried officer, De Louvigny, set out from Quebec to destroy the Foxes. On the route they were joined by allied Indians until the command numbered eight hundred men. In due time they reached Green Bay, the first hostile expedition of white men that ever touched the shores of Wisconsin.

Thence they toiled up the rapids of the Fox river until they came to the town of the Foxes which, according to tradition, was located at Little Butte des Morts, a slight eminence close to the west bank of the river and nearly oppo-

(1) Perrot, *Moeurs des Savages*, 153. Also La Potherie.

site to the site of the city of Neenah.¹ Here the savages had fortified themselves in the rude way known to their engineering art, having run a triple row of oaken palisades around their town and in the rear dug a deep, wide ditch. Within the enclosure were five hundred warriors and three thousand women and children.

The Foxes at this time were in all the perfection of savage wildness. Their dislike of the French had kept them free from the touch of civilized vices and miseries. The Jesuit missionaries noted the absence of sickness among them, having found on their first visit but one person seriously ill, a consumptive child.² "They abound in women and children," says a French Memoir of 1718. "They are as industrious as can be. The people live well on account of the abundance of meat and fish. The hunting is excellent and the river is full of fish. The men wear scarcely any clothing in the summer time. . . . But the girls are robed in black or brown fawn skins, embellished all around with little bells

(1) The Chicago & Northwestern Railway was laid out through this famous mound and almost the entire hill has been dug away.

(2) *Relation*, 1671.

or similar ornaments. They are pretty enough."¹

Such were the savages who had gathered behind their oaken palisades to await the coming of De Louvigny and his destroying army. "Everybody believed," writes Charlevoix,² "that the Fox nation was about to be destroyed; and so they themselves judged when they saw the storm gathering against them; they therefore prepared to sell their lives as dearly as possible."

One can but dimly imagine the scene: thousands of men, women and children tranquilly awaiting their doom; the busy preparations for war, the few guns made ready, spears sharpened, the stone arrow-heads securely fastened to their shafts; the council fires around which the warriors crouched, row upon row, in solemn conclave; the long fastings, for the Foxes, very devout after their own fashion, would often fast ten days at a time on the eve of battle;³ their incessant war dances now slow and measured, now growing fast and furious until the forests rang with their wild songs and cries of defiance.

(1) *N. Y. Col. Documents. Memoir upon the Indians of Canada*, IX, 889.

(2) Charlevoix, *History of New France*, IV, 155.

(3) *Relation*, 1671.

The French, taught wisdom at Detroit, proceeded with the utmost caution. Unwilling to risk an open assault against the redoubtable Foxes, they besieged them in regular form. For three days the French toiled in the trenches, "sustained by a continuous fire of fusileers with two pieces of cannon and a grenade mortar." The Foxes, on their part, fought with their wonted valor. From the first they had been expecting a re-inforcement of three hundred men, doubtless Mascoutins. Disappointed and desperate they made a furious assault upon the enemy, but were finally driven back behind their palisades.

The trenches which had opened at seventy yards distance, had been pushed forward to within twenty-four yards of the fort. On the third night, DeLouvigny was ready to explode two mines under the defenses and to storm the place. At the last moment the Foxes offered to surrender, but the French commander refused to listen to them. He had come not to negotiate, but to destroy.

The deputies came forth a second time to sue for peace. Why DeLouvigny should now have acceded to their proposition is a mystery not worth the unravelling; perhaps he knew that the long expected reinforcements

were close at hand; or very likely he doubted the nerve of his allies when brought face to face with the Foxes. At any rate, in his official report he tried to throw the responsibility for the peace upon the allied Indians. "I submitted to them the enemy's proposition and they consented to it." But this the French Indians indignantly denied. Five years afterward an attempt was made to once more unite them in a crusade against the Foxes and they refused; "it is difficult," they said "to place confidence in the French who had once before united the nations to assist in exterminating the Foxes and then had granted peace without even consulting the allies."¹

The conditions of surrender were remarkably mild, showing plainly that something had gone wrong in the project of extermination. The Foxes were to give up their prisoners; they were to hunt to pay the expenses of the war; they were to take slaves from different nations and deliver them to the allies to replace the dead; six chiefs, or children of chiefs, were also to be taken to Quebec as hostages. Peace concluded, De Louvigny set out on his homeward march, arriving at Quebec on the 12th of October. The next day he made a report to

(1) *New York Col. Documents*, IX.

the council, ending with the boast that "he had reunited the nations and left that country enjoying universal peace."

The next spring De Louvigny was sent back to secure the full performance of the conditions. During the winter, however, three of the Fox chiefs held at Quebec, had died of the small-pox, another, apparently the only remaining one, had lost an eye, and with but this solitary and disfigured hostage the French officer was compelled to return. He himself, a little timidly perhaps, stopped at Michillimackinac, and thence sent forward the one-eyed hostage, with two French interpreters to perfect the treaty.

After their arrival among the Foxes, several days were spent in mourning for the dead. This to the savages was the most sacred of all solemnities. "Their toils and their commerce," writes the Jesuit Brebeuf,¹ "seem to have no other end than to amass the means of honoring the departed; they have nothing too precious for this object; often in mid-winter you will see them going almost naked, while they have at home good and costly robes which they keep in reverence for the dead." And now the Foxes were bewailing the loss of their

(1) *Relation des Hurons*, 1636, 128.

three principal chiefs—above all, of the renowned Pemoussa, who had commanded them at Detroit and had led the remnant of the nation safely back to its Wisconsin home. It was a common grief shared by every member of the tribe. Day after day they lay, face downward, upon their mats, speechless or else chanting the death-songs dolorously.¹

These solemn duties discharged, a council was called to consider the treaty with the French. The one-eyed hostage gravely harangued his countrymen upon their failure to keep the stipulations of the surrender. They, on their part, were very contrite and made many promises. They even signed an agreement in writing that they would send deputies to Montreal, the next spring, to finish the treaty. Armed with this precious document the hostage, with the two French interpreters, set out for Michillimackinac.

But when they had gone about ten leagues, the hostage began to hesitate. He felt it his duty, he said, to go back to his people and labor with them in order that they might keep faith with the French. So saying, the savage diplomat turned his back upon his fellow travelers

(1) Hale. *Book of Iroquois Rites*, 71.

and was soon lost to view in the depths of the forest. And that was the end of the treaty with the Foxes.

Shall we pause to bewail the faithlessness of the Foxes? They had been schooled in perfidy by the French, and the events at Detroit were still fresh in their memories; their suspicions had been roused by the mysterious death of their chiefs at Quebec; they were struggling for home and liberty against a host that had united for their destruction. It may be that their conduct was open to criticism. But let him that is without sin, just cast a stone at them.

It is no part of my design to idealize the Fox Indians. Doubtless they were savages addicted to nudity, lying and other unsavory habits. Placed under the microscope of exact research, they became as unromantic as other human beings. But after all, the story of their resistance to the French, and of its wide-sweeping results, has about it as much of the heroic and the grand, as the hard realism of history will ever permit.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT CONFEDERACY.

1716-1726.

The expedition of De Louvigny had accomplished nothing but evil. Instead of being destroyed, the Foxes had only been roused to fiercer efforts; now that the old chiefs were dead, slain by the small-pox at Quebec, there was no check upon the hot-headed impetuosity of the young warriors;¹ and the next year after the attempt to perfect the peace, they had joined with the Mascoutins and the Kickapoos in another war against the Illinois.² Everywhere else tranquility reigned. But this wrath of the Wisconsin Indians against the French and their vassals was the black thunder-cloud that seemed all the more ominous amidst the universal sun-shine. "All would be peace on this continent," De Vaudreuil in 1719 wrote plaintively to the king, "if it were not for this

(1) Alluded to so late as 1727. *Cass Manuscripts. Wisconsin Hist. Collections*, III, 163.

(2) De Vaudreuil to the Minister, Oct. 30, 1718. *Canadian Archives*, 1886, p. LVII.

perpetual war of the Foxes and their allies against the Illinois."¹

It was now the period of John Law and his celebrated Mississippi scheme. France, impoverished by the gilded follies of Louis XIV, suddenly became a perfect fairy-land of mock prosperity.² Of course, the valley of the Mississippi shared in this glamour; nothing was too absurd to be believed concerning its hidden wealth. Pearl-fisheries were said to abound in its waters. The prairies of Illinois were underlaid with vast deposits of gold and silver; and in 1719, Renault, Director-General of the Mines of Louisiana was sent, with two hundred miners and artificers to unearth these fabulous treasures. The wool of the buffaloes also was to furnish inexhaustible material for the manufacture of cloth and hats; for this purpose they were to be 'domesticated, gathered in parks, and transported to France.'³ Forty years before, indeed, the mad brain of La Salle had given birth to this plan for utilizing the buffaloes.⁴

(1) *New York Coll. Documents*, IX, 893.

(2) Justamond, *Lewis XV*, vol. 1, page 82, gives a list of immense fortunes suddenly acquired. Consult also Buckle. *Hist. Civilization*, 1, 516.

(3) Charlevoix, *Hist. New France*, III, 389.

(4) Parkman, *La Salle*.

The bubble soon burst, but it left behind it some solid benefits. Many colonists were forwarded; "persons without means of livelihood," according to St. Simon,¹ "sturdy beggars, male and female, and a quantity of public creatures were carried off;" but they entered upon a new life amidst the wilds of the Mississippi. A considerable settlement was formed below the Kaskaskia. Trade and agriculture flourished; not only furs but grain and flour were shipped down the river to France, or to the West Indies. Fort Chartres was built with walls of solid masonry—the key-stone in that great arch of forts which stretching from Quebec to the mouth of the Mississippi was designed to shut the English up in the narrow strip of land along the Atlantic, and to establish the unity of the French Empire in the West.

The Foxes, therefore, in their struggle to destroy the Illinois Indians and to gain control of the Illinois river, were aiming their blows at the very heart of the French Dominion. The colonial authorities fully realized the danger. "The nation," wrote Charlevoix in 1721,¹ "which for twenty years past has been the

(1) *Memoires of St. Simon*, III, 236.

(2) Charlevoix. *Letters*, London, 1763. *Letter XIX*, July 21, 1721, p. 211.

most talked of in these western parts is the Outagamies or Renards. The natural fierceness of their savagery soured by the ill-treatment they have received, sometimes without cause, and their alliance with the Iroquois have rendered them formidable. They have since made a strict alliance with the Sioux, a numerous nation inured to war; and this union has rendered all the navigation of the upper part of the Mississippi almost impracticable to us. It is not quite safe to navigate the river of the Illinois unless we are in a condition to prevent surprise, which is a great injury to the trade between the two colonies."

But this account does not do full justice to the diplomacy of the Foxes; for, when Charlevoix wrote, they had not completed their work. Year by year they went on extending their league and increasing the uneasiness of the French. "They will array all the upper (western) nations against us," wrote one commandant to another.¹ And in the end a league was formed, by the side of which Pontiac's famous confederacy, or any other ever established among Indians, seems but a trivial affair.

(1) M. de Lignery to M. de Siette. *Cass Manuscripts. Wisconsin Hist Collections*, III, 155.

This great league comprehended, first, all the nations of Wisconsin, excepting those faithful henchmen of the French, the Chippewas. The Mascoutins and Kickapoos, as we have seen, had long been in closest union with the Foxes. The Sauks, even as late as the time of Charlevoix's visit,¹ had been divided into two factions, for and against the Foxes; but soon afterward they all joined the great confederacy. The Winnebagoes, also, were won over. Even the peaceful Menominees were drawn into the league against the French and were the first to feel their vengeance.²

These many tribes had hardly anything in common. They were of different races and languages; from the East, the West, the North and the South, they had been driven into Wisconsin like drift-wood flung upon a common shore. The uniting of these diverse, jealous, warring tribes is a wonderful tribute to the wisdom and patience of the Foxes.

Beyond the Mississippi, the league embraced the formidable Sioux. To break up this alliance and to bring the Sioux into commercial dependence upon the Chippewas, instead of

(1) Charlevoix. *Letters*, 204.

(2) *Crespel's Narrative*. *Wisconsin Hist. Coll.*, X, 50, The Pottawattamies were faithful to the French, but had now abandoned Wisconsin for Michigan.

the Foxes, the French, in 1719 had re-established their post at Chaquamegon Bay, not now, as formerly at its head, but at its entrance upon Madeleine Island.¹ They had also endeavored to plant a post somewhere on the banks of the Upper Mississippi. But their efforts availed nothing. The Foxes held the two gateways to the West, and still monopolized both the trade and friendship of the Sioux.

Thanks to the jealousies which from the first had subsisted between Canada and Louisiana² both the Sioux and the Foxes were being amply equipped for war. The commandants in the north and the south, were disputing as to their respective jurisdictions, and were all eager to issue as many licenses as possible; the *coureurs de bois*, freed from restraint by these rivalries, were supplying the enemies of France with guns, powder and lead in abundance. "This" the Marquis de Vaudreuil complained³ "contributes more than all else to foster the haughtiness of the Sioux and the Foxes. The latter are especially intractable and have a very bad influence upon the former. They have so

(1) Margry, VI, 507.

(2) *Memoire d'Iberville*. Margry, IV, 611.

(3) *Lettre de M. de Vaudreuil*, Nov. 4, 1720. Margry, VI, 509-10.

prejudiced them against us with stories of our treacherous designs that the Sioux turn a deaf ear to all the persuasions of our officers."

The far-reaching diplomacy of the Foxes triumphed, even among the Iowas and the tribes along the Missouri river. The government of Louisiana was at this time paying the closest attention to the Missouri country and had sent troops to build forts, as far west as the mouth of the Kansas river, to check the raids of the Spaniards from New Mexico.¹ In 1724, M. de Bourgemont, the French commissioner in that quarter, communicated to the counsel at New Orleans an unpleasant discovery. "I have been greatly surprised," he writes, "to hear that the Hotos and the Iowas have made a firm alliance with the Foxes and the Sioux, the enemies of the French."²

He claims indeed to have so intimidated these savages that they had promised "not only to break their alliance with our enemies, but to fight them and do whatever I command." One cannot but suspect this sudden repentance on the part of the too contrite savages. At any rate, the French were greatly alarmed. "If

(1) *Lettre de Bienville au Conseil de Regence.* Margry, VI, 386.

(2) *Lettre*, Jan. 11, 1724. Margry, VI, 466.

these nations had raised the hatchet against us," continues M. de Bourgemont, "the Mayas and Paninkas would certainly have joined them. I doubt even whether we should have been able to sustain ourselves at Fort Chartres."

The sinister influence of the Foxes extended even into the far South. There, according to Charlevoix,¹ they entered into alliance with the Chickasaws, who, gathering around them all the hostile elements on the Lower Mississippi gained famous victories over the French. It was this diversion that saved the Foxes from utter ruin, at the crisis of their misfortunes.

Such, then, was this great confederation built up by the genius of the Foxes, one which, considering the vast extent of territory over which it stretched, the number of tribes and the diversity of races which it included, is utterly without a parallel in the history of the American Indians. The French pretended that it was the result of the intrigues of the English whom they saw everywhere, as people see ghosts in a graveyard. But there is no proof nor likelihood of any active co-operation on the part of the English. The league rose as we have described, the spontaneous work of

(1) *History of New France*, V, 309.

savages, who desired freedom and hated the French.

Nor did the Foxes, amidst the toils of diplomacy, neglect the work of war. Their attacks upon the Illinois went on unceasingly until all the latter, excepting one tribe, were compelled to flee far southward and seek protection under the guns of Fort Chartres. The tribe which did not flee, the Peorias, had taken refuge on Rock St. Louis. This famous rock, the whilom capital of La Salle's imaginary kingdom, was one of Nature's fortresses. Standing on the very brink of the Illinois river, it rose one hundred and twenty-five feet above the water's level. Its front over-hanging the river and both its sides were steep as castle walls; but in the rear was a narrow path-way by which the height could be scaled. The level summit, about an acre in extent, gave ample room for defense and afforded a grand view of the surrounding country—the undulating prairie, the distant hills, the shining river fenced by narrow strips of forest.

It was a formidable stronghold; but the undaunted Foxes determined to take it. Unluckily we know nothing of the details of the siege, except the number of the slain; twenty Peorias and one hundred and twenty of the besiegers.

But the bare figures are eloquent; they tell, not of a mere blockade, but of fierce assaults, storming parties, desperate attempts to scale the heights—the old story of the Foxes' fury and reckless courage. Soon, however, word was carried to the commandant at Fort Chartres, and he prepared to march to the rescue of his allies, with a force of one hundred and forty Frenchmen and four hundred savages. But before he arrived upon the scene, the Foxes raised the siege and marched away; they saw that with so large a force threatening their rear, the capture of the Rock was impossible.

The attack seems a piece of splendid folly; but in the end its wisdom was fully justified. For, as soon as the siege was over, the besieged Peorias prepared to flee; they saw themselves at the mercy of the Foxes from whom there was no security, except on the barren summit of Rock St. Louis; and they, therefore, determined to join the other Illinois tribes in the South. And no persuasion of the French could keep them from instantly putting this project into execution. "It was a grave disaster for the French," Charlevoix says.¹ "For now, that there was nothing to check the raids

(1) *History of New France*, VI, 71.

of the Foxes, communication between Canada and Louisiana became much less practicable.

The French, however, made every effort to keep control of the Illinois river. Not long after the events just narrated, *Sieur de St. Ange* drew a large body of the Foxes into an ambuscade and cut them to pieces. Other of their bands met with a similar fate. "But," writes *Charlevoix*, "their fury increased as their forces diminished. On every side they have raised up new enemies against us. The whole course and neighborhood of the Mississippi is infested with Indians with whom we have no quarrel, and yet who give to the French no quarter."

CHAPTER VIII.

EXTERMINATION BY FAMINE.

1726-1728.

On the 7th of June, 1726, at Green Bay, a grand council with the Sauks, Winnebagoes and Foxes was held by M. de Lignery, with whom were D'Amariton, the commandant of the post, and Chardon, its missionary. As usual upon such occasions, the savages were contrite and apologetic. They threw the blame for the past upon the impetuosity of their young warriors. "It is not without difficulty," said the chief of the Sauks, "that we have gained over our young men." The Winnebago chief spoke in the same strain. "We old men do not agree with our young men, for if they sustained us they would never do any of these bad things." Then he began to accuse the Foxes. "They are numerous, my father. It is they who invite our young men to do as they do for the fear they have of them."¹

(1) *Cass Manuscripts. Wis. His. Coll., III, 152, 3.*

On all sides there was a great clamor for peace. "The chiefs of the nations said, with tears, that there was no hope except in obedience." But on both sides it was all a farce—the handshaking of pugilists in the prize ring, before the brutal fight begins. The French neither expected nor desired peace; they were bent upon the destruction of the Foxes.

Even before the convening of the council, M. de Siette, commanding in the Illinois country, had written to M. de Lignery "that the Foxes were afraid of treachery, and that the surest mode of securing our object is to destroy and exterminate them."¹ But the French authorities hesitated, not from any horror of such butchery, but because the attempt would be dangerous and expensive. "We agree that this would be the best expedient, but we maintain that nothing can be more dangerous or more prejudicial to the colonies than such an enterprise, in case it should fail." The King of France wrote the governor general to the same effect—"for there is the uncertainty of success, and the consequences of a failure might be frightful, besides the enterprise would cause a heavy expenditure."²

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 148.

(2) *Memoire of the French King to Beauharnois and Dupuy, on the Fox War*, 29th April, 1727.

The French, therefore for the time being, assumed a gentler tone. For the sake of conciliation they were willing even to forego the pleasure of burning their prisoners. "The Foxes testified to me," writes M. de Lignery, "that some of their nation had been given to the French, who had burned them upon the spot; this had completely exasperated them and made them anxious to kill." An order was now issued by the governor general to discontinue this practice; but in the order there was no tinge of a blush for the past. Burning men alive was simply inexpedient. "It has only served to irritate the Fox people and arouse the strongest hatred against us."¹

A peculiar piety lingered about this ferocity of the French. A little before the meeting of the council at Green Bay, the governor had addressed a deputation of Chippewas at Quebec; and had condoled with them on account of their losses in war. "But it appears to me," he added, "that Heaven has revenged you for your losses, since it has given you the flesh of a young Fox to eat."² What shall be said of a religion that could speak of the Supreme Being as actively engaged in provid-

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 149.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 166.

ing young and tender victims for a cannibal feast?

The peace of 1726 then was a mere mockery. It was a temporary truce during which the French were busily preparing for the slaughter of the Foxes. "In the meantime," writes De Lignery,¹ "we are laboring by way of La Pointe to detach the Sioux from their alliance. We endeavor also to stop their passage to the Iroquois, those Indians having offered them an asylum." Thus all avenues of escape, either to the east or the west, were to be closed against the doomed nation.

To carry out this purpose so far as the Sioux were concerned, the French had been long trying to establish a trading post on the Mississippi. But the art and fury of the Foxes had prevented. In 1725, Chardon, missionary at Green Bay, had written to his Superior that it was impossible to send an expedition or missionaries to the Sioux on account of the Foxes who declared defiantly that they would never permit the French to pass because it would greatly diminish their own trade; and they had killed several Frenchmen who at different times had attempted it.² But now that the

(1) *Letter to M. de Siette*, June 19, 1726. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

(2) *Lettre de Longueil et Begon au Ministre de Marine*. Margry, VI, 543.

truce was established, another effort was made. A trading corporation, the company of the Sioux, was formed; and in June, 1727, an expedition commanded by La Perriere de Boucher, of infamous memory, with a few soldiers and traders and two missionaries, was dispatched from Montreal.

The voyagers reached Green Bay safely, thence pushed up the river past the village of the Winnebagoes, and about eight leagues beyond came in sight of the long, low cabins of the Foxes. The town built upon a slight eminence by the river side, contained—according to Inignas, one of the missionaries, who gives an account of the voyage¹—only two hundred warriors. But it fairly swarmed with boys from ten to fourteen years of age who would soon be able to fill the places of the countless braves slain in the long warfare against the French.

The little party drew near to the town with many misgivings; for this was the critical point of their journey. But peace had been recently established, and the savages were on their good behavior. “Of all nations, the Foxes are the most dreaded by the French,” Guignas says, “but we found in them nothing to fear. As

(1) *Lettre a Beauharnois*. Margry, VI, 554.

soon as our canoes touched the shore they came to us with their pipes lighted, although it was raining heavily. And everybody smoked."

A council was called; the French were readily permitted to proceed, and went on their way rejoicing. They soon arrived at Lake Pepin. There, at about the middle of the west side of the lake, upon a low spit of sand nearly opposite to the famous Maiden Rock, they built Fort Beauharnois.¹ So much at least, the French had gained by their treaty of peace with the "faithless Foxes."

This accomplished, the French threw aside the mask, declaring that peace was no longer possible. They claimed that war parties were still going from Wisconsin against the Illinois. They were alarmed at the encroachments of the English who had recently built a stone fort at Oswego, on Lake Ontario, and were said to be intriguing with the Indians for the expulsion of the French from the West. The Foxes, it was reported, had accepted the belts of the English, and had declared that they would not suffer the French to remain in their country. "The colony," wrote the governor and intend-

(1) Neill. *Early Wisconsin Exploration*. *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, X, 302. Also Draper, *Ibid.*, p. 371.

ant to the king, "is reduced to an extremity which justifies war."

The colonial authorities were so eager to begin their fiendish crusade that they did not even wait for the approval of the king; and for this they were censured by the home government. But they amply justified themselves on two grounds. First; "it was already known that the court had nothing so much at heart as the destruction of the Foxes."¹ Secondly; "the intrigues of the English and thewar parties which the Foxes were raising every day did not allow them to defer this expedition for a year without endangering the loss of the whole country."²

The preparations for the campaign were carried on with the utmost secrecy. The Canadians and friendly Indians were notified to hold themselves in readiness for a movement the next spring against the new English fort at Oswego; and until the last moment they knew nothing of their real destination. "It is the intention," wrote De Beauharnois to the king,

(1) *Cass Manuscript. Wis. Hist. Coll.*, III, 164.

(2) *Memoire of De Beauharnois. Smith, History of Wisconsin*, I, 343. Note. Just before the starting of the expedition, the king wrote: "His Majesty is persuaded of the necessity of destroying the Fox nation." *Letter of the king*, 14 May, 1728. *N. Y. Documents*, IX, 1005.

“to make this war a brilliant affair; and it is therefore of the utmost importance that the Foxes should not be informed of the design.”¹

The expedition, commanded by M. de Ligny, left Montreal on the 5th of June, 1728. It was composed of four hundred Frenchmen and nearly nine hundred savages from many nations, but chiefly converted Iroquois and Hurons. A large re-enforcement of Indians was expected at Mackinac. The commandant in the Illinois country had also been ordered to meet the expedition at Green Bay with all his force, French and Indian.² All this against a handful of savages that did not now probably number five hundred fighting men.

The army toiled painfully over the usual route by way of the Ottawa river. In struggling through the wilderness, by narrow trails and difficult portages the force was necessarily split into small detachments; but by July 26th, all had reached the rendezvous on the shore of Lake Huron. Here mass was celebrated before the reunited army. The place of worship was a green prairie, smooth as a temple floor, walled in upon the one side by the dim arches of the forest, on the other by the glistening

(1) *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, III, 163 and 164.

(2) *Letter to M. de Siette*, Aug. 20, 1727. *Ibid.*, 163.

waters of the inland sea. In the center stood three priests clad in the stately vestments of their office; before them an altar transported with infinite pains through the wilderness. Roundabout was a motley host. Soldiers in uniform and Canadian hunters in their many-colored garb stood beneath the banners of France; scantily costumed savages crouched or lay flat on the ground, with eyes and ears intent upon the "great war medicine" of the French. After these pious exercises the multitude set out with new ardor to exterminate the Foxes.

Mackinac was soon reached and here ensued an inexplicable delay. Everything depended upon a swift, unexpected swooping down upon the enemy; and yet M. de Lignery loitered for nine days. The whole army murmured; the Indians, always restless when on the war-path, were almost frantic over the detention. No excuse was ever offered for thus lingering except that "M. de Lignery was too ill to go on." But a more probable explanation is suggested by a statement made by Montcalm concerning this officer when long afterward he was in command at Fort Duquesne: "the Indians do not like M. de Lignery who is drunk every day."¹

(1) Parkman. *Montcalm and Wolfe*, II, 169.

The expedition finally got under way, and on the 15th of August reached the abode of the Menominees, on the river of the same name. "This people," writes the chaplain of the army,¹ "are some of the tallest and handsomest men in Canada." He coolly adds, that "we landed with a view to provoke them to oppose our descent; they fell into the trap and were entirely defeated."

After this brilliant exploit, the French moved on to within eight or ten miles of the village of the Sauks at Green Bay. Here the expedition was halted until night, and then paddled silently on under cover of the darkness. The Sauk village was reached about midnight; a part of the force was sent around to the rear to surround the sleeping foe; the rest made a brave dash on the front. Of course, the inhabitants amply warned, had fled. Four poor creatures, however, were found lurking in the cabins; and these were handed over to the French Indians, who "made them suffer the pain of twenty deaths before depriving them of life."

Then the invaders passed up the river to the town of the Winnebagoes. "Our people were

(1) Crespel. *Expedition against the Foxes.* Wis. His. Coll., X, 50.

well disposed to destroy those that might be found there, but the flight of the inhabitants saved them and we could only burn their huts and destroy the harvest of Indian corn on which they subsist."

Then, after celebrating mass, these devout vandals moved on to the chief settlement of the Foxes. But the savages, unwilling to be exterminated, had fled four days before. An old man, two women and a girl were captured however, and burned at a slow fire.

The French still paddled up the river until they reached another town of the enemy and found this too, a solitude. Their savage allies refused to go further, saying that the fugitives having four days the start, could not be overtaken. Winter, also, was rapidly approaching and the French were four hundred and fifty leagues from home; outwitted and foiled, they were compelled to return. On their way back they demolished the fort at Green Bay, believing that it could not be held any longer; took with them its garrison and missionary and hastened homeward.

Was then the tiger to be balked of his prey? No, malignity has many resources. Before setting out on their return the French army had "employed several days in laying

waste the country, to deprive the enemy of the means of subsistence." Nothing escaped them. They burned the villages, they "destroyed all that they could find in the fields, Indian corn, peas, beans and gourds, of all which the savages had great abundance."¹ Thus the Foxes, against whom all other arts had failed, were left to the mercies of winter and starvation.

It seems, too, as if that mysterious and malign element, so often found in Nature, had come to the aid of human hate. The next winter, according to the chief historian of New France, was one of unusual severity; such intensity of cold had hardly ever been known since the first settlement of Canada.² To this, thousands of Fox women and children were left exposed, without shelter or food. The lambs had been shorn but the winds were not tempered.

The glee of the French was great. "Neither the glory nor the arms of the king will suffer by this expedition," the official dispatch declares. The more misery, it seemed to be thought, the more glory for the king;

(1) *Ibid.*, 53.

(2) Ferland, *Cours d'Histoire du Canada*, II, 435. Ferland mentions this without any reference to the attempted starvation of the Foxes.

and therefore the mathematical Frenchmen carefully computed the number of the perishing. "It is certain," wrote the Marquis de Beauharnois, triumphantly, "that one half of these nations who number four thousand souls, will die of hunger, and that the rest will come in and sue for mercy."

CHAPTER IX.

EXTERMINATION BY FIRE.

1728 – 1736.

In the first days of September, 1728, four thousand exiles, their homes burned and their fields laid waste, were fleeing for their lives along the Wisconsin. The women and children were carried in canoes, but the warriors traveled on foot, struggling through the thickets and across the swamps and sands that lined the river.¹ Reaching the Mississippi, they turned to the North, and very soon a host of savages, wild with hunger and with rage, were peering through the leafy forests that rose above Fort Beauharnois on Lake Pepin. They had come expecting aid in the hour of their distress, from their friends and allies, the Sioux. But they found, as countless other poor wretches have found, that friendships are like reeds; they must not be leaned on too heavily. The Sioux had been won over to the French by the planting of the trading post in their midst the year before; and they turned a deaf ear to the entreaties and reproaches of their

(1) *Lettre au Ministre de Marine*, Oct., 1729. Margry, VI, 561.

old confederates. "There is no doubt," the governor general wrote to the colonial minister,¹ "that the Foxes would have found an asylum with the Si'oux, if the French fort had not been established there."

Thus the confederacy formed by the Foxes with so much pains and skill began to crumble; not long after, these hapless savages were also deserted by their oldest and closest allies, the Mascoutins and Kickapoos. On the approach of the terrible Foxes, Fort Beauharnois had been temporarily abandoned, and a large part of its garrison, including Guignas, the missionary, had fled southward, hoping to find refuge among the Illinois, nearly six hundred miles away. But they were intercepted in their flight by the Mascoutins, who had been driven from Wisconsin into Northeastern Iowa. At first the captives were very roughly handled, and Guignas narrowly escaped being burned alive, According to his own account, however, he finally so ingratiated himself with the savages that they released him after five months of captivity, and sent with him envoys to the Illinois and the French to sue for peace.²

(1) *Lettre au Ministre de Marine*, Oct. 1729. Margry, VI, 561.

(2) *Lettres Edifiantes*, I, 771. *Lettre du Pe're Le Petit* 12 Juillet, 1730.

Probably more potent reasons than the wheedling of the Jesuit, influenced the Mascoutins. At any rate it is certain that in the spring of 1729, they declared war against the Foxes.¹ The Sauks also fell away and returned submissively to their old home at Green Bay. The Winnebagoes having fled from their devastated land, found refuge among the Sioux, and for the next nine years dwelt peacefully around Fort Beauharnois.² Under the pressure of cajolery and violence the league had gone to pieces; the Foxes were left alone to face the storm of French vengeance.

Driven away by the Sioux, they found some sort of an asylum in the land of the Iowas.³ But subdued by hunger and cold, crushed by the desertion of all their allies, longing for home, they returned the next season to Wisconsin. They were broken in spirit, willing to yield everything to the insatiable French. "The Foxes are begging for peace," Beauharnois wrote triumphantly to the King.⁴ But their

(1) *Beauharnois to the Minister*, May 19, 1729. *Canadian Archives*, 1886, p. xciv.

(2) *Memoir upon the Indians of Canada*, 1736. *New York Coll. Docs.*, X, p. xciv. Also Margry, VI, 575.

(3) *Memoir of Beauharnois*, 1729. *Smith's Hist. Wisconsin*, 344.

(4) *Letter to the minister*, Aug. 17, 1729. *Canadian Archives*, 1886, p. xciv.

peaceful proposal was answered only by a fierce assault upon one of their encampments by a body of French Indians.¹

Somewhat later, probably about the close of 1729, another expedition, composed of Ottawas, Chippewas, Menominees and Winnebagoes, was sent against the returning exiles, and succeeded in ambuscading a detachment of them. The latter had only eighty warriors; but they fought with their wonted valor, until all excepting three were either killed or captured. Three hundred women and children were also taken prisoners. All were burned to death.

The French authorities were delighted. Beauharnois wrote to the minister exultantly: "I communicate this news with so much the more pleasure because there is no doubt of it."²

The French used to apologize for their burning of prisoners as a lesson taught them by the savages. "Among the wolves we have learned to howl," wrote Cadillac flippantly.² But the savages burned men—conceiving that death at the stake was that final and supreme test of courage from which no brave man ought to shrink. The burning of women and chil-

(1) Letter of Oct. 25, 1729. *Ibid.*, p. xcvi. Also *N. Y. Coll. Docs.*, IX, 1017.

(2) *Relation*, etc. Margry, V, 100.

dren, however, subserved no such purpose, and was something quite unknown to the primitive red man. He regarded children, especially, with so passionate and indulgent a love that his indignation was aroused by even the sight of the whippings and other severities visited upon the young in the white man's settlements; and to torture the little ones at the stake was a development of malignity far beyond the reach of his unprogressive nature. That was the invention of the French—one of those depths of infamy into which it would seem that only the civilized can sink, as a stone descends with the greater force when it falls from the greater height.

Despite these barbarities on the part of their enemies, the Foxes did not yet despair of peace. Not long after the burning of the three hundred women and children, the great chief of the nation made his way through the wilderness in the depth of winter, to the distant post of St Joseph in southern Michigan. "I look upon myself as dead," he said to the commandant there. Asking for nothing except the lives of the women and children, he promised that this people would send deputies to Montreal the next spring to sue for mercy.

But the doomed nation might as well have appealed to the pity of the winds. In March, 1730, they were again attacked by a force under the command of the afterwards noted Marin. "An action ensued of the warmest kind, and very well supported," says the official dispatch. Beyond that we know nothing.

One thing about this transaction, however, is noteworthy. The French now began, apparently, to feel some slight sense of shame over this persistent malignity toward a foe suing for mercy; and they tried to excuse themselves by casting the blame upon their savage allies. "This expedition was undertaken," we are told, "at the earnest solicitation of the Indians."

But if any one doubts who were really at the bottom of these atrocities let him read how these same Ottawas were induced by the French to massacre the forty Iroquois deputies at Mackinaw, in 1695. At first the Ottawas sturdily refused to thus violate the law of nations which was just as sacred among the savage as the civilized; but they were plied with liquor by the French until they became a mere mob of drunken madmen, and in this condition they fell upon the unsuspecting deputies and slew them all. Frontenac, then gov-

error, narrates all this without the tinge of a blush, and adds boastfully: "Thus we have entirely broken up the inception of peace."¹

Two months after Marin's departure, another exterminating expedition, composed of five hundred and fifty Indians and fifty Frenchmen, set out from Mackinaw. Its commander, Du Buisson, declared that "all the nations of the upper country are very much excited against the Foxes; large bodies of Indians have collected and urged me to go at their head to fall upon that people and destroy them." But the statement, doubtless, is as false as those which he made, at the time of the betrayal and massacre of the Foxes at Detroit, in 1712.

At any rate, Du Buisson and his allies were foiled of their prey. Even before they were ready to start, the enemy had fled southward beyond reach of pursuit.

When the curtain next rises upon the wretched fugitives, we find them gathered on the Illinois river, not far from Rock St. Louis, and there fortifying themselves as for a desperate resistance. Word was quickly sent to all the commandants in that part of the West—St. Ange in the country of the Illinois, De Noyelles among the Miamis in Indiana, De

(1) Narrative of 1695-6. *New York Col. Docs.*, IX, 640.

Villiers at Fort St. Joseph in Michigan; and they all assembled their forces and hastened to the spot, determined to sweep the unhappy Foxes from the earth. De Villiers took command of the combined forces which amounted to eleven hundred Indians and one hundred and seventy Frenchmen.

The battle began on the 19th of August, 1730, and lasted twenty-two days. The Foxes had chosen an admirable position in a piece of woods upon a gentle slope by the side of a small river. Although outnumbered four to one, they fought with their usual dash and valor, making many desperate sorties, but were each time driven back by the overwhelming numbers of the enemy. The French, on their part, dug trenches, and proceeded with all the caution they had been taught by many campaigns against these redoubtable foes.'

(1) Ferland, *Cours d'Histoire du Canada*, II, 436, *seq.* To this historian's heretofore unnoticed account, I am indebted for my narrative of this battle. Ferland, unfortunately, never gives his authorities; but he is known to have been an untiring delver among the manuscripts in the Archives at Paris. The slight reference to De Villiers' expedition, preserved in the *New York Col. Docs.*, so far as it goes, corroborates the account of Ferland. And the *Canadian Archives Report*, 1886, p. c, lists a dispatch about "the crushing defeat of the Renards by De Villiers." *Letter of Beauharnois and Hocquart to the Minister*, Nov. 1, 1730.

After a while the supply of food gave out and famine reigned in both camps. The Foxes and the French, the oppressed and the oppressor, suffered alike under the calm, cruel impartiality of nature. Two hundred Illinois Indians deserted. But the French persevered, and began the construction of a fort to prevent the besieged from going to the river for water. Further resistance now seemed impossible.

But on the 8th of September, a violent storm arose, accompanied by heavy thunder and torrents of rain. The following night was rainy, dark and cold; and under its cover, the Foxes stole away from their fort. Before they had gone far, the crying of their children betrayed them. But the French did not dare to attack them amidst a darkness so dense that it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe; in the morning, however, they set out in hot pursuit.

The fugitives marched with the women, children and old men at the head, the warriors in the rear to protect their flight; thus cumbered they advanced but slowly and were soon overtaken. The warriors were without ammunition,¹ enveloped on every side by a vastly su-

(1) Even during the siege, the Foxes had been supplied with ammunition, only by the help of some of the French allies who secretly favored them. Ferland, *Cours d'Histoire*, II.

perior and well-armed force, entangled in crowds of helpless women and children whom they were striving to defend. Under such conditions the battle soon became a massacre. Only fifty or sixty men escaped; three hundred "were killed or burned after being taken prisoners,"¹ Six hundred women and children also perished either under the tomahawk or by fire.

The proportion of women and children to that of men slaughtered is here not so great as in previous massacres. The reason was that many of the savages, notably the Miamis and Sauks, recoiled from this wholesale murdering of the defenseless. The French complained that even during the siege, "their allies, under various pretexts, helped a large number of the women and children to escape from the fort and thus saved them from the massacre of their nation."²

Still nine hundred men and women had been massacred, either by the knife or by the slower and more horrible doom of fire; and despite the escape of a few, the French were cheerful. "Behold," wrote the Canadian governor to the

(1) *N. Y. Col. Documents*, IX. This dispatch puts the number at 200, Ferland at 300.

(2) Ferland, II, 438.

king, "a nation humiliated in such a fashion that they will nevermore trouble the earth."¹

Happily we are now permitted a slight breathing-spell midst this recital of horrors. The curtain suddenly falls, for two years, upon the wanderings and miseries of the indomitable Foxes. There is indeed one report of an attack made upon them by the young warriors of Illinois,² and other similar enterprises are vaguely mentioned.³ But in the main it is an interval of peace. The French availed themselves of it to re-establish the fort on Lake Pepin which they had been compelled to abandon;⁴ and rejoiced in other "happy results from the defeat of the Foxes."⁵

When, on the 17th of October, 1732, the curtain again rises, the remnant of the Foxes are dwelling peaceably upon the borders of the Wisconsin. But the wrath of the implacable French had flamed forth anew. A body of Christian Iroquois from the St. Lawrence,

(1) *M. de Beauharnois* 'a *M. de Maurepas.*, *Ibid.*, 18 Mar., 1731.

(2) *Beauharnois to the Minister*, Oct. 12, 1731. *Canadian Archives*, 1886, p. CVII.

(3) *Ferland*, II, 439.

(4) *Lettre de Beauharnois*. *Margry*, VI, 569.

(5) *Ibid.* *Canadian Archives*, CVII.

and of Hurons from Detroit, had been dispatched from the latter place to once more exterminate the people who had been so pitilessly pursued for twenty years. The invaders pushed on until they reached the basin of the Wisconsin. Ascending one day the summit of a hill, they looked down and beheld their prey dwelling quietly in the vale beneath. It was the work of but a moment to discharge their guns, and tomahawk in hand swoop down upon the village. The Foxes expecting no danger were but poorly prepared for battle, and after a short contest three hundred of them—men, women and children—were captured and massacred.¹

The rest dispersed among the neighboring nations. One party, consisting of thirty or forty men and as many women, wended their way in despair to Green Bay and threw themselves upon the mercy of the French commandant, De Villiers. In this party was the grand chief of the Foxes, Kiala, who was soon sent to Quebec, and thence hurried off into slavery under the blazing skies of Martinique. His wife followed him as far as Quebec; but there

(1) Ferland, II, 438, alone gives the narrative of this expedition. But he is very fully corroborated by the lists and abstracts of despatches in the *Report of Canadian Archives*, 1886, p. CXI, *et seq.* No less than five are given.

she lingered for some time, distracted between her wifely affection and her horror of bondage. At last woman's love conquered, and she went to join her husband in the slave-gang.

The historian may well rejoice in this little bit of savage romance, sad but sweet, that comes to relieve the blackness of all these civilized iniquities.

The other fugitives who fled to Green Bay were more fortunate; for nearly a year they were permitted to remain undisturbed in the village of the Sauks, across the river from the fort. But the French government finally determined to demand their surrender; and to enforce this demand, M. de Repentigny, the commandant at Mackinaw, was secretly sent with sixty Frenchmen and two hundred Indians to the aid of De Villiers, who had been promoted to the command at Green Bay; after a consultation between the two officers, this force was ordered to lie concealed about a mile from the fort until three gun-shots should be heard, which was to be the signal for an immediate advance. This arranged, De Villiers returned to the fort, and sending for the Sauk chiefs, laid his demands before them.

Life, he said, had been accorded by the government to the Fox fugitives, but only on

condition that they should deliver themselves to him, in order to be carried to Montreal; if they were not forthcoming at a certain hour, he further declared, he himself would go to the Sauk village and take them. The chiefs listened gravely and then withdrew to consult with their people. One can readily imagine the results; the Foxes having in view the fate of their great chief, Kiala, and the horrors of Martinique, were quite unwilling to go to Montreal; the Sauks, with whom, as with all savages, the rites of hospitality were sacred, having once welcomed the fugitives into their cabin, would not betray them. The hour passed; but the Foxes did not appear at the fort. De Villiers taking with him De Repentigny and eight other Frenchmen, hastened to the palisaded village of the Sauks to carry out his threat. Enraged by the contempt of the savages for his authority, and maddened, according to the traditions, by strong drink, he attempted to force an entrance. The principal chief entreated him to desist, saying that the young men could not be controlled, and that if he did more, he was a dead man.'

(1) Ferland. *Cours d' Histoire*, II, 440. He is abundantly corroborated by no less than five lengthy dispatches devoted to this affair that are listed in Brymner's Report. 1886.

The furious Frenchman not only persisted, but drew up his gun and shot the chief dead. With unabated fury he slew another chief, and then a third. For a moment the Sauks were stupefied, and the first to recover himself was a brave boy, only twelve years of age, who leveled his gun and killed the brutal commandant.¹ Then a general melee ensued, in which De Repentigny and all the Frenchmen except one were slain.

In this account I have followed the French reports except in regard to the first firing, which they claim was done by the Indians. But herein the carefully preserved tradition is intrinsically more credible; besides, it is corroborated by the admission of the official dispatches, that "the disaster was caused by the rash courage of De Villiers."² And whichever account may be true, it is plain enough that the outrageous Frenchman met only his just deserts.

But the French thought only of revenge.

(1) *Grignon's Recollections*. *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, III, 204. So far as known to me, this noted tradition recorded by Grignon, has never before this been corroborated and its date fixed by reference to Ferland or to the Canadian Reports. Another version of the tradition is given in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, VIII, 207.

(2) *Letter of Beauharnois to the minister*, Oct. 13, 1733. *Canadian Archives*, 1886, p. CXX.

The governor writing to the minister recounts "the perfidy of the Sauks, who have killed De Villiers and others;" and declares that it is necessary to avenge them.¹ The Sauks, foreseeing the storm of vengeance that was to burst upon them, prepared to abandon their country forever, and after three days set out in the darkness of the night. The French, who had not dared attack them behind their palisades, pursued and overtook them about twenty miles away. There a fierce battle was fought with heavy losses on both sides. The Sauks then continued on their way.

The exiles wandered far and long, gathering up the fragments of the Fox nation as they went. In their extremity they sought an asylum among the Iowas, but were refused. Then they turned to the Sioux and Winnebagoes settled around Fort Beauharnois. But these prudent savages were solicitous for their trade; vowed eternal friendship with the French and asked to be led to battle against the Sacs and Foxes. Linctot, the commandant, however, doubted the depth of their devotion, and wisely refused to head another crusade.² The

(1) *Report of Beauharnois and Hocquart*, Nov. 11, 1733, *Ibid*, CXIX.

(2) Margry, VI, 570. *Extract d'une Lettre Mme. de Beauharnois et Hocquart au de Ministre de la Marine*. 7 Oct. 1734.

wanderers, left to themselves, finally fixed their abode on the Wapsipinac river about two or three day's journey southwest from the mouth of the Wisconsin.

Even into this far country the hate of the French pursued them. In August, 1734, De Noyelles, with eighty¹ Frenchmen and the usual contingent of converted savages, set out from Montreal to reach the exiled Sacs and Foxes. This expedition from the first, was strangely mismanaged; several months were consumed in the march; in the meantime the enemy had fled farther westward and strongly fortified themselves on the banks of the Des Moines. The French arriving at last, carried on a desultory and farcical kind of siege for several weeks. Their Indian allies grew disgusted and many deserted. As all hopes of success dwindled away, the French smothered their wrath and began to negotiate. They succeeded in cajoling the Sauks into some sort of a promise that they would separate from the Foxes and relight their fires at Green Bay. Then the French set out on their inglorious return²

(1) 60 were regular soldiers, according to the army report of Beauharnois, Oct., 1734. *New York Coll Docs*, IX, 1046.

(2) Ferland, II, 441. Also *N. Y. Coll. Documents*, IX, 1051. Three dispatches devoted to this expedition are listed in *Can. Archives*, p. CXX to CXVII.

“The ill-success of De Noyelle’s expedition,” wrote the governor apologetically, “was due to the bad conduct of the Indians, and especially the Hurons.”¹ But the French themselves had lost all stomach for any further fight with their indomitable foes, and the dispatch just quoted proceeds to point out the “great danger of pushing the Sacs and Foxes to extremity.” The next year it was announced that peace had at last been established with those nations.²

Thus the war against the Foxes was ended, after having lasted just a quarter of a century. During that time these savages confronted an array of horrors which has no counterpart in history. The triple agencies of the sword, starvation and the stake were evoked to destroy them. They were betrayed by their friends, and entrapped by the matchless perfidy of their foes. Their homes were burned, their lands laid waste, and they themselves driven forth, like wild beasts from their dens.

In four states of this Union, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin, they were hunted, besieged and slaughtered. Wherever they went their trail could almost be traced by the dripping of their blood. Two thousand of them

(1) *Letter of Beauharnois*, Oct. 17, 1736.

(2) *Ibid.*, Oct. 16, 1737. C. A. p. cxxxi.

—if the French did not over estimate their own baseness—were left in a single winter to die of cold and hunger. Out of their small numbers twenty-five hundred were burned to death at slow fires.

The story of it all affects us like the visions of Dante's *Inferno*; one is incredulous rather than horrified. But every item of the story rests upon the admissions, or rather the boasts, of the French themselves. The Indian version of it has never been told.

And these wonderful savages were not exterminated. According to a French memoir of 1736, they still had one hundred warriors—seven or eight hundred souls in all. Nor were they ever subjugated. That same year, 1736, Boulanger, a French missionary, wrote to the colonial minister: “They have deceived the king in making him believe that the Foxes are destroyed * * * The only result has been to augment expenditures and render that nation more insolent then before.” It makes one think better of poor humanity to read that.

The Foxes, although reduced to a little band of exiles, were as undaunted and defiant as ever. But in attempting to destroy them, the French Dominion in the West had received a blow from which it never recovered.

(1) Ferland, II, 441.

CHAPTER X.

THE WEST IN REVOLT.

1738—1752.

We have described in a former chapter the policy of cajolery and intimidation by which the French hoped to secure the allegiance of the Indians and the control of the continent. Up to 1712 this policy had been successful. Drawn by their desire for trade and their respect—almost reverence—for the mysterious power of the whites, the Indians were, in the main, friendly to the French. But at the end of the Fox war all this had changed. The splendid resistance of the Wisconsin savages, and the revelation of the white man's weakness and wickedness had disenchanted the Indians. The prestige of the French was gone. The larger part of their trade had been diverted either to Hudson's Bay or, through the Iroquois, to the English settlements on the coast. Indian friendship had given way to turbulence, sullenness and contempt. In trying to stamp out the Wisconsin fires the French had only scattered the sparks in every direction.

The Sioux, the ruling nation beyond the Mississippi, became refractory and hostile. In 1736 they massacred a part of Verendrie's force and put an end to his explorations in the remote West; about the same time they began a fierce war against the Chippewa allies of the French;¹ and the next year became so riotous around Fort Beauharnois on Lake Pepin—burning the buildings and pillaging the traders—that the post had to be abandoned.² Thus the French were cast off from the West.

Simultaneously the flames of revolt burst forth in the South, and the French suffered frightful disasters in their vain attempt to subjugate the Chickasaws. Eastward also the fires spread. Even those humble servants of the French, the Hurons and Ottawas around Detroit, became turbulent and for three years made ceaseless trouble.³ In 1740, the Canadian governor wrote to the court lamenting the “drunkenness and insolence of the Indian allies in the West.”⁴ Discontent and tumult reigned everywhere.

(1) *Letters of La Ronde*, Comd't at Chequamegon, June 28 and July 21, 1738. *Can. Archives*, 1886, p. CXXXIV.

(2) Margry, VI, 575.

(3) *Beauharnois to the Minister*, Sept. 17, 1741. *Can. Archives*, 1886, p. CXLIX.

(4) *Ibid*, July 6, 1740, p. CXLIV.

The Foxes, although seemingly crushed and cut to pieces, needed only a little breathing spell and then they too were ready for revolt. Peace had been made with them in 1737 as we have seen. But it could not have lasted long; for in 1739 the French were forced to make another peace with these irrepressible savages.¹ This proved also a very fleeting affair. The Foxes renewed their ancient alliance with the Sioux, and in 1741 both were again warring against the French allies, the Chippewas in the north and the Illinois in the south.² In 1742, however, the Canadian governor announces "the submission of the Sioux, Sauks and Foxes."³ But the next year he makes another report in a more subdued strain concerning "the measures taken to prevent a union between the Sioux and the Foxes."⁴

A somewhat later dispatch apologizes for the increase of colonial expenditures by the plea that they had been obliged that "year to give so many presents to the Sioux, the Sauks and Foxes."⁵ To that condition the French Do-

(1) *Ibid*, June 30, 1739, p. CXXXVII.

(2) *Ibid*, Sept. 24, 1741, p. CXLIX.

(3) *Ibid*, Sept. 24, 1742, p. CXLII.

(4) *Ibid*, Sept. 18, 1743, p. CXLVI.

(5) *Letter to Count Maurepas*, Oct. 13, 1743. *N. Y. Col. Documents*, IX, 1099,

minion in the West had been reduced. It existed at the sufferance of these truculent savages who could be pacified only by presents.

During these turbulent times, the Chippewas began to form settlements in the interior of Northern Wisconsin; having finally lost the friendship and trade of the Sioux, their position on the shore of Lake Superior became less valuable and many of them withdrew to better hunting grounds on the head waters of the Chippewa and other rivers. Tradition preserves a graceful story concerning the origin of one of these new villages. While a hunting party was encamped on the shore of a lake in the forest, a little child died and was buried by the water-side. The party pressed on. But the hearts of the father and mother still clung to the child and the next summer they came back to grieve by the grave. Unable to tear themselves away, they built their lodge there, alone in the woods, on the war-path of their enemies, but close to the precious ashes. But their grief was sacred and no one molested them. From time to time other Chippewas came and built their lodges likewise by the side of the lake. Thus began the still existing village of Lac Court Oreilles.¹

(1) Warren, *History of the Ojibways. Minnesota Hist. ll.*, V. 127.

The story has no sponsor except tradition. But it is of historic value for the light it throws upon the Indian nature—that tangled incongruity of good and bad which underlies the red skin and the white.

Still the whirligig of war and peace went on. In 1747 the Canadian governor wrote to the colonial minister that “there is a great change of feeling among the Indians of the West, and that the state of affairs there is very bad.”¹ In 1747, Marin, commanding at St. Joseph in Western Michigan, reports that the savages in that quarter, heretofore so faithful to the French, “are being debauched by the English.”² The same year another commandant writes concerning “the great revolt in the Detroit region.”³ Of this revolt, notable as arising among the chief allies of the French, Pontiac spoke in 1763, saying that “seventeen years ago the Northern nations combined under the great chief, Mackinac, and came to destroy the French at Detroit; and that he (Pontiac) aided the French in fighting their battles with Mackinac and driving him home to his country.”⁴

(1) *Beauharnois to the Minister* Oct. 29, 1745. *Canadian Archives*, 1887, p. CLVII.

(2) *New York Col. Documents*, X, 139.

(3) *M. de Raymond to the Minister*, Nov. 2, 1747. *Cass, Archives*, 1887, p. CLXV.

(4) Smith. *History of Wisconsin*, I, 361.

The next year the Miamis, then the most powerful and peaceful confederacy east of the Mississippi, revolted, pillaged a French fort and committed other acts of violence.¹ The French began to see the handwriting on the wall. Startling rumors arose of a vast conspiracy among all the Western Indians to destroy the trading posts and drive the white man from the country.² Even the Chippewas, so long faithful to the French, were now drawn into the fiery circle of revolt. In 1748, Galissoniere, the governor, reports that the voyageurs had been robbed and maltreated at Sault Ste Marie and elsewhere on Lake Superior. "In fine," he adds, "there appears to be no security anywhere."³

In 1750 the Miamis again revolted, leaguering themselves with the Mascoutins on Rock River and even urging the Illinois to join them; but the latter with characteristic slavishness betrayed the plot to the French.⁴ And not long

(1) *New York Coll. Documents*, X, 140 and 150. Also other references.

(2) *Ibid.*, 142.

(3) *Letter to Count Maurepas*, Oct. 1748. *Neill in Minn. Hist. Coll.*, V, 430.

(4) *Letter of M. Benoist, concerning a conspiracy of the Miamis*, Oct. 1, 1751. *Can. Archives*, 1887, p. cxc. Also *Dispatch of De Vaudreuil*, Sept. 18, 1750. *N. Y. Col. Documents*, X, 220.

after, the French were forced to build a fort at Sault Ste Marie, "to prevent the Chippewas and other Indians from communicating with the English."¹

Thus I have laboriously collected the widely scattered evidence of the real relations subsisting between the French and Indians. The common conception which has passed into history is, that the two races dwelt together like cooing doves. But in fact, from 1737 onward the French could hardly depend upon the friendship even of the refugee tribes, the Hurons, Ottawas and others. And of the original occupants of the West all were hostile except the Illinois, a people debauched and spiritless who were fast fading away before the fury of the Foxes and the Sioux.

We catch a glimpse also of the hidden forces that were working for the overthrow of New France. Her destiny had been virtually decided long before the English armies encamped around Quebec. The policy by which she hoped to hold the continent had proved an utter failure; the Indians were estranged and trade demoralized; a chaos of revolt and misrule had set in throughout the whole magnificent domain.

(1) *Jonquiere to the Minister*, Oct. 5, 1751. *Can. Archives*. CLXXXIX.

And has it not been likewise shown that the long and gallant resistance of the Wisconsin Indians, in the face of great odds and frightful sufferings, was the entering wedge of ruin for the French Dominion in America.

Other causes were, of course, conspiring to hurry on the French Dominion to ruin. By the middle of the century the colonial government had touched the lowest point of corruption. It was the era of Bigot, the evil genius of New France. He and his accomplices were stealing millions from the king, the colonists, the soldiers and the savages. No one escaped their rapacity; even the Acadian exiles were fed on mouldered and unsaleable cod-fish, which was charged to the king at enormous prices.¹ Montcalm boldly averred that the chief officials of New France were "hoping and plotting for the ruin of the colony in order that all recorded evidence of their peculations might be hidden under the wreck."²

Under such malign influences the fur trade sank lower and lower, until it became but another name for plundering the savages. Ac-

(1) Parkman. *Montcalm and Wolf*, II, 27.

(2) *Montcalm to Marshal de Belle Isle*, April 12, 1759. *Can. Archives*, 1887, p. CCXXIX. Also Garneau. *History of Canada*, I, 547.

according to the admission of the French themselves their goods were inferior and their prices enormous.¹ The traders carried large supplies of liquors and made the savages drunk in order to swindle them more effectually. At one western post in 1754, beaver skins were sold for four grains of pepper apiece; and a pound of paint which the savages bought to improve their complexions, realized a profit of eight hundred francs.²

The savages struggled to escape from such a system of multiplied robberies. The Miamis for instance, after two or three revolts, moved eastward into Ohio in order to open trade with the English. "Our friendship," they told Gist, the envoy from Virginia, "shall stand like the lofty mountain."³

Even in these evil times Wisconsin did not lose the prominence which it had had from the first days of the French Dominion. Green Bay now became the chief center of operations in the west for that band of corrupt officials who were plundering both the Indians and the government.

(1) *Bigot to the Minister*, Oct. 1749. *N. Y. Coll. Documents*, X, 200. Also De Bougainville, in Margry's *Memoirs Inédites*, p. 74.

(2) Smith. *Canada*, I, p. LXVIII.

(3) Bancroft. *History of the United States*, III, 54.

In 1750 Marin was sent to Green Bay ostensibly to act as governor of the northwest and to continue the explorations of Verendry in search of a passage to the Sea of the West. Really he came to manage the affairs of a secret partnership, of which he himself, Bigot, the intendant of the colony, and La Jonquiere, its governor, were the members.³ Their object was to monopolize as far as possible the fur trade of the Northwest, and their annual profits amounted to one hundred and fifty thousand livres, equal to as many dollars in the present day. Besides, the firm was engaged in other transactions. They divided among themselves the profits of Capt. St. Pierre's exploring expedition, which made no discoveries, but brought back furs of great value; the governor's share, alone, it is said, amounting to three hundred thousand livres. In all the gains of the Green Bay ring, from their various enterprises, must have amounted to millions.

While thus engaged Marin became the hero of an exploit more noted than anything else in the traditionary annals of Wisconsin. But heretofore the date of it has not been fixed; and even the chief actor has been known only

(1) *Memoire de Bougainville sur l'Etat de la Nouvelle France*. Margry. *Memoires Inedites*, p. 59.

as a "prominent French trader," otherwise unidentified.

Some time before, the Fox Indians had crept back to their old homes on the Fox river and with their wonted arrogance, began to levy tribute upon the passing traders. The commerce of the whole Upper Mississippi country was at their mercy. Marin resolved to put a stop to this; and quietly collecting all his available forces, he set out from Green Bay with the utmost secrecy. Arriving at a point some miles below the Fox village, the force was divided, one part disembarking and going by land to attack the savages in the rear. The rest laid down in the canoes and were covered over by large tarpaulins such as were used by traders to shield their goods from the weather. Two men to row each boat were left in view. It was to all appearance a peaceful trading fleet.

In due time the Foxes discovered the approach of the fleet. Rushing to the shore they hung out a lighted torch, the usual signal for the traders to land at this aboriginal custom house. Then they squatted upon the bank and waited patiently for their customary dues. The boats rounded to, in obedience to the signal and drew close to the shore; the savages

still sat expectant but serene, with all the grave decorum of Indians upon a state occasion.

Suddenly the tarpaulins were flung off from the boats. A long line of armed men sprang up, with their guns pointed at the astounded Foxes. It was as if the infernal flames had burst from the depths of the river. The savages had hardly sprung to their feet before many were mowed down by a volley of musketry and the discharge of a swivel gun loaded with grape and canister. The rest, with a yell of dismay, fled to their village, closely pursued by the French. Here a new horror confronted the flying mob. The flanking party had by this time reached the rear of the village; some of them, creeping stealthily in, had set on fire the frail bark cabins; and the wind was wrapping everything in flames.

The Foxes, rushing wildly about amidst their burning cabins, found themselves hemmed in by a storm of bullets from front and rear. Women and children ran to and fro, shrieking and blind with fright; mothers snatched their babes and fled they knew not whither.

But the warriors, long schooled by the French in such horrors, rallied and fought des-

perately. Out of the smoke and flame they flung themselves against the force in the rear and struggled to cut their way through, with knives and tomahawks. Many succeeded and escaped into the forest, followed by throngs of women and children. The rest were hewn down, singing their death-song amidst the flames. No quarter was given and none was asked. In a few moments all was over. What a little while before had been a peaceful village, was a heap of ashes studded with the dead.

As a mere tragedy, this is rivalled by many others in the appalling story of the war against the Foxes. But the grotesque surprise, the grim glare of humor lighting up the horror, makes an altogether matchless scene. According to the traditions, Marin struck other blows against his enemy, but the accounts are too confused to enter into sober history. Suffice it that the Foxes were expelled forever from their ancient home and once more found a refuge on the Wisconsin.

But let us do no injustice to Marin. He was a soldier with a military code of morals; but he was wise, brave and loyal to France. The stern and incorruptible Du Quesne, ad-

mired him greatly¹ and selected him as the one man fitted to command on the Ohio, in that critical hour when the Indian revolt had reached its height and New France was beginning its last struggle for life. Thus he was called from his speculations at Green Bay to nobler tasks. A few months afterward he died; and Du Quesne wrote to the king that "the death of Marin is an irreparable loss to the colony."²

(1) *New York Coll. Documents*, X, 254. Also Margry, VI. 634.

(2) *Du Quesne to the Minister*, Oct. 7, 1753. *Can. Archives*. 1887, p. CXCVI.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FALL OF THE FRENCH EMPIRE.

1752-1763.

The Sauks, after their expulsion from the Green Bay region, built a town on the banks of the Wisconsin near what is now Prairie du Sac. Carver, who travelled through Wisconsin in 1766, describes it as the largest and best built Indian town that he ever saw. "It contained about ninety houses, each large enough for several families, built of heavy planks, neatly jointed and covered so compactly with bark as to keep out the most penetrating rains. Before the doors were placed comfortable sheds in which the inhabitants sat when the weather would permit and smoked their pipes. The streets were both regular and spacious, appearing more like a civilized town than the abode of savages. The land was rich, and corn, beans and melons were raised in large quantities."¹

(1) Carver. *Travels*. 47. A very admirable account of this noted traveller is given by Durrie. *Wisconsin Hist. Coll.*, VI, 220-270.

The Foxes, after their long wanderings, finally settled near the mouth of the Wisconsin, on the site of Prairie du Chien. They had selected their new location with characteristic sagacity, and it soon became the great mart of the Northwest. There the adjacent tribes and even those from the remote branches of the Mississippi annually assembled about the end of May; and it was determined in a general council whether it would be best to dispose of their furs to the traders upon the spot or to transport them to the Lakes or to Louisiana.

Mining, as well as commerce, contributed to the prosperity of the Foxes. Towards the close of the 17th century the Miamis had worked the lead mines south of the Wisconsin, but probably only after the rude fashion known to the Iroquois in Canada, who hewed out long splinters of ore and cut them up into bullets.¹ But the Foxes smelted the ores and carried on a regular mining industry with such jealous secrecy that no white man was permitted to come near their mines.²

From their firm friends, the Sioux, they had obtained horses and learned the art of horse-

(1) Boucher. *Canada*.

(2) *Early History Lead Regions*. Wis. Hist. Coll., VI, 272. Washburne, *Ibid.*, X 244. Shaw. *Ibid.*, II, 228.

manship, so that in a few years their warriors were all finely mounted.¹

The thoughtful reader will be surprised by these tokens of great prosperity and progress on the part of a people who for more than forty years had been crushed under almost every conceivable form of disaster and suffering. And his wonder will grow when he considers the degradation of the tribes that had clung most closely to the French. Carver, who overflows with praises of the Sauks and Foxes, describes the Chippewas as "the nastiest people" he had ever seen, and the Illinois everywhere were a bye-word on account of their vile habits and their cowardice.²

But the explanation is simple. The tribes that had been the most hostile to the white man, his faith and modes of life, had best preserved the national spirit, the respect for ancestral and public opinion, the *esprit de corps* upon which savage virtue depends. "They combine," writes Carver,³ "as if actuated only

(1) Long, *Voyages and Travels*, 149.

(2) Pitman, *Account of the Mississippi*, London, 1770, p. 53, describes the Illinois as a "poor, debauched and dastardly people," but praises the Mascoutins, Miamis, etc., as brave and warlike. Parkman admits the extraordinary degradation of the Illinois. *La Salle*, 207, note.

(3) *Travels*, 412.

by one soul. The honor of their tribe and the welfare of the nation is the first and most predominating emotion of their hearts. Hence proceed in great measure, all their virtues and vices. They brave every danger, endure the most exquisite torments and expire triumphing in their fortitude, not as a personal qualification, but as a national characteristic."

The wisest of the Indians saw that they must exclude the white man's influence and his faith, if they wished to preserve their own polity and the special savage virtues. When the Senecas, out of their conquests, gave the Shawnees a country to dwell in, they charged them never to receive Christianity from the English. "Before the missionaries came," they said, "the Indians were an honest, sober and innocent people, but now most of them are rogues; they formerly had the fear of God, but now they hardly believe his existence."¹ Without accepting all that, one may see that the higher faith must necessarily be destructive even to what is best in the lower.

When in 1752 the elder Marin was ordered to take command on the Ohio, his son succeeded him at Green Bay. Soon a new partner-

(1) Long. *Voyages and Travels*, 32.

ship was formed, having the same equivocal object as the old one, but composed of the younger Marin, and Rigaud, a brother of the governor of Canada. The affairs of the new firm prospered, and in two years the partners divided between them a profit of one hundred and twelve thousand livres.¹

Outside of these transactions, Marin did good service for New France. He drew back to the colony for a time, at least, the fur trade of the Northwest, which was being diverted to Hudson's Bay.² "In two years," he claimed, "I travelled more than two thousand leagues on foot, often in snow and ice, running a thousand dangers from savage tribes, and meeting privations of every sort. In those two years I conquered more than twenty nations, who have since been loyal to France and made war in our behalf."³ There is doubtless some excess of color in this, but still Marin did brilliant work.

(1) Margry. *Memoires Inedites*, 59.

(2) Dobbs. *Account of the Hudson's Bay Countries*, London, 1745, p. 43. According to a pamphlet printed in 1750, the heavy furs went to Hudson's Bay; the lighter to Canada. *Short Statement*, etc., p. 16. This pamphlet can be found in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society.

(3) Margry, VI, 654. Also *N. Y. Coll. Documents*, X, 263.

A still more notable name is that of Charles Langlade, who came to Green Bay as a trader about the middle of the century. The brilliant service and the utter obscurity of this man cause one to almost despair of history.

In 1752 the revolt in the Valley of the Ohio was at its height, the Miamis and other tribes having entirely renounced allegiance to France. To strike terror into the hearts of these savages, an expedition mainly composed of the faithful Ottawas, was sent from northern Michigan, and Langlade, whose father was a Frenchman but his mother a sister of the Ottawa head-chief, was placed in command. The young man, then only twenty-three years old, marched swiftly to western Ohio, with a force of thirty Frenchmen and 250 Indians. On the morning of the 21st of June, he suddenly appeared before Picqua, a town of four hundred families, the strongest in the Valley of the Ohio and the residence of the grand chief of the Miami confederacy. The surprise was complete, and after a short but fierce resistance, the Miamis surrendered. One English trader was killed and five taken prisoners, the town was burned and the grand chief of the confederacy sacrificed at a cannibal feast.

Then young Langlade swiftly departed, leaving the French flag flying over the ruins.

"Thus," says Bancroft, "began the contest that was to scatter death broadcast throughout the world." The immediate results of this sharp and sudden blow were very great; the Indians, dismayed by such prompt vengeance, returned to their old allegiance, and soon throughout the Valley of the Ohio there floated no banner but that of France. But while the colonial authorities exulted in his success, they dismissed the low-born Langlade with disdain. "As he is not in the king's service, and has married a squaw," wrote Du Quesne, the governor, "I will ask for him only a pension of two hundred francs, which will flatter him infinitely."¹

The young leader, therefore, resumed his former work at Green Bay, bartering calicos, needles and rum for the furs of the Indians. But three years later he was called forth again, to lead his faithful Ottawas to the relief of the little garrison at Fort Du Quesne, then imperilled by the approach of Braddock and his army. And to the military genius of this untrained half-breed, was due that wonderful

(1) Du Quesne to the Minister, Oct. 25, 1752. *Can. Archives*, 1887, p. cxci. Also Parkman. *Montcalm and Wolfe*, II, 84-85. Parkman's tone is as lofty as the Frenchman's.

“Defeat of Braddock,” the fame of which resounded throughout Europe, taught the thirteen colonies to despise the English regulars and thus led the way to the War of Independence. The statement seems incredible, but as will be seen in a note below,¹ is supported by the most irrefragable proofs.

We cannot follow further the life of Langlade. Suffice it that throughout the war he continued to render valuable although not quite so splendid services to France—each year leading down the Indian allies from the West to the aid of Montcalm. But it was all an unavailing struggle in behalf of what long had been a lost cause. The Fox wars had

(1) First: Gen. Burgoyne, writes to Lord Germain, July 11, 1777, of Langlade as “the very man, who with these tribes, (Ottawas, etc.) projected and executed Braddock’s defeat.” *Expedition from Canada, London, 1786. Appendix*, p. XXI. Second: Amburey, an officer in Burgoyne’s army, wrote in 1777, that they were expecting the Ottawas, led by St. Luc, and Langlade, and adds that “the latter is the person who at the head of the tribe which he now commands planned and executed the defeat of Gen. Braddock.” (*Journey*, I, 315.) Third: The very circumstantial account given by Langlade himself, in Grignon’s Recollections. (*Wis. Hist. Coll.*, III, 212-215.) Fourth: The testimony of De Peyster, commanding at Mackinaw, who in his Miscellanies alludes to Langlade as “a French officer who had been instrumental in defeating Braddock.” (*Ibid.*, VII, 135, note.) Concerning silence of French official records, see, *Ibid.*, p. 150-1.

shown twenty years before that it was impossible for French despotism to hold America. The sentence then pronounced upon the French Dominion, was finally carried into execution at the fall of Quebec.

After the occupation of the West by the English,¹ Langlade returned to Green Bay and founded there the first permanent settlement of white men in Wisconsin—a rude little village of French traders, the humble monument of a fallen Empire.

(1) In Sir Guy Carleton's report of 1767, Langlade's residence is set down as still at Michillinackinac Brymner, *Can. Archives*, 1888, p. 45. .

CHAPTER XII.

THE CONSPIRACY OF PONTIAC.

1763.

The English in their occupation of the country, adopted the French policy. They did not design to form settlements in the West. It was feared that colonies in so remote a region could not be controlled and therefore the country beyond the Alleghanies was shut against the emigrant. Royal orders forbade the Virginians from settling in the valley of the Ohio; in Pennsylvania it was even proposed to abandon Fort Pitt, and to bring all the settlers back to the eastern side of the mountains. "The country to the westward quite to the Mississippi, was intended to be a desert for the Indians to hunt in and to inhabit."¹

Such a policy made it easy for Pontiac to organize his famous conspiracy. That bloody postscript to the history of the French Dominion has been strangely misinterpreted; it is commonly conceived of as a general uprising of the Western Indians against the English;

(1) Bancroft, III, 401-2.

and its chief historian¹ declares that "the whole Algonquin stock with a few unimportant exceptions," were engaged in it. But all that is wild and wide of the mark. The conspiracy was confined to what we have described throughout this history as the French Indians, consisting mostly of refugee tribes who had always clung to France, and it did not even include all of them. That large part of the Ottawas that dwelt in Northern Michigan, wavered, and as we shall see, finally sided with the English. The Chippewas around Mackinaw were active conspirators; but the main body dwelling at Chequamegon Bay—where were the council house and sacred fire of the nation—took no part in the revolt.²

Beyond these refugee races the conspiracy did not spread. The Miamis, the dominant confederacy in the Ohio valley, stood aloof. Above all, the tribes massed upon the Fox and Wisconsin rivers—the Menominees, Winnebagoes, Sauks and Foxes—adhered firmly to the English cause; and it was their prompt, decisive action which sealed the fate of the conspiracy. Thus to the end Wisconsin remained the pivot upon which the fortunes of the West revolved.

(1) Parkman, *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, I, 187.

(2) Warren, *Hist. Ojibways. Minn. Hist. Coll.*, V. 210.

To show this we must go back two years. On the 12th of October, 1761, Lieut. Gorrell, with seventeen men, arrived in Green Bay to assume command of the Northwest. Already the fomenters of revolt had been there. Some French traders had passed up Fox river on their way to the Sioux; and although in English employ they had "done all that laid in their power to persuade the Bay Indians to fall upon the English, telling them that the latter were very weak and that it could be done very readily."

Some of the young warriors, always eager for any fray, were willing enough. But the ancient hatred and scorn of the French flashed forth in the answer of the head-chief of the Sauks. "The old and great man of the Sauk nation whom they call a king, told the Frenchmen that they were English dogs or slaves now that they were conquered by the English; that they only wanted his men to fight the English for them, but he said that they should not. He called the French old squaws and commanded the young men to desist, which they did and went to their hunting."¹

The winter was spent in repairing the old French fort and the buildings; it was not until

(1) *Gorrell's Journal. Wis. Hist. Coll.*, I, 26.

the next season, after the Indians had returned from their hunting-grounds, that any councils were held. First came the Menominees. "They were very poor," they said, "having lost three hundred warriors lately with the small-pox and most of their chiefs in the late war in which they had been engaged by the French commandant here against the English." They were very glad to find that the English were pleased to pardon them as they did not expect it and were conscious that they did not merit it. They asked for a gun-smith, and modestly suggested that "the French always gave them rum as a true token of friendship." They rejoiced to hear that the English traders were coming among them. "We have already found by experience," said the sagacious savages, "that the goods are one-half cheaper than when the French were amongst us."

Some Winnebago chiefs were present at this council and spoke to the same effect. A fortnight later, ambassadors arrived from the Sauks and Foxes, with pledges of peace and good-will. In August the chief of a more distant town of the Winnebagoes came to declare that his people had never been at war with the English, nor could the French commander persuade him to it as he never knew of any

harm the English had done him. With him came also four ambassadors from the Iowas, who said that "they had come from very far to see if I would shake hands with them and forgive them as I had done the rest."¹

In March, 1763, the long looked for deputies of the Sioux arrived. They brought a letter from their king in which he expressed his joy at the coming of the English, asked for friendship and trade, and promised that if the Chippewas or any other tribe should make trouble, he would come with his warriors and wipe them from the face of the earth.

Thus all the tribes of the Northwest, from Lake Michigan to the Missouri, had welcomed the English with unbounded delight. The time was now near when their loyalty was to be put to the test. On the 15th of June, the news, came like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, that the Chippewas had captured Mackinaw and massacred a part of its garrison. Pontiac and his fellow-conspirators had begun their work.

Not long before Pontiac had secretly visited Wisconsin and won over the Milwaukee band, a mixed village of refractory and turbulent Indians, the offscouring of many different tribes.

(1) *Ibid.*, p. 30-36.

But the real tribes of Wisconsin had indignantly spurned his messages and war-belts. "I want no such message. I mean to do no wrong to my English friends," Carron the grand chief of the Menominees, had answered.¹

But Gorrell knew nothing of this, and was naturally very much alarmed. In an agony of suspense he went to the Menominee chiefs to find out what they were about to do. A grand council of the whole tribe was called, and with an ardor unusual among the stoics of the forest, all agreed that they would go to the relief of the English at Mackinaw. Swift runners were also sent to the other Indian nations. Three days afterward the chiefs of the Winnebagoes, Sauks and Foxes arrived in great haste, saying that their warriors were on the way. With them came Pennensha, a French trader, but a firm friend of the English, bringing new pledges of fidelity and assistance from the Sioux. When all the warriors had arrived another great council was convened. "All the chiefs said," writes Gorrel, "that they were glad they could now show the English how much they loved them, and that we should find

(1) *Grignon's Recollections. Wis. Hist. Coll.*, III, 226.

that they would keep their promise of the year before.¹

Preparations were speedily made and then the relieving expedition set out from Green Bay. The Indians, fully alive to the gravity of the crisis, took precautions quite unusual for them; every night before landing to camp, they sent a large party to scour the woods in every direction in order to guard against surprise. "The king of the Sauks," writes Gorrel, always went in the batteau with me, and would always lay in the tent, so great was their care." When they drew near the village of the Ottawas, whom they believed to be traitors at heart,² they made ready for battle; the English batteau was placed in the centre; the Menominees, stripped for action, went in the front.

At the sight of this formidable array, the Ottawas were overawed. They resolved to side with the English, although the other half of

(1) Parkman. *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, I, 363, at a loss for any plausible explanation of the action of the Wisconsin Indians, ascribes it to Lieut. "Gorrel's prudence." There is not the least spark of evidence to this effect. The reader of the preceding pages needs no explanation of the eagerness with which these savages welcomed the English as the conquerors of the hated French.

(2) Before leaving Green Bay, they told Gorrel not to trust himself to the Ottawas. *Wis. Hist. Coll.*, I, 40.

their nation at Detroit were fighting under the lead of Pontiac. And so the expedition was received with clamors of welcome, salutes were fired, pipes of peace were smoked, and then came feasting, dancing and councils without end. At first the Wisconsin Indians demanded that the Ottawas should join with them in reinstating the English commander, Capt. Etherington, at Mackinaw. But this the Ottawas were not willing to attempt, although they promised to do all in their power to conduct the English back to Montreal. And it is not likely that the latter, after they learned what was going on at Detroit and in the lower country, wished to remain.

Gradually the bloodthirsty Chippewas also began to weaken. On the 13th day of July they came to the English very penitently. "They said that although it was the Chippewas that struck, it was the Ottawas that began the war at Detroit and instigated them to do the same. If the General would forgive them they would never act thus again." Capt. Etherington replied that if they expected any mercy they must give up their prisoners.

The next day the Chippewas returned and asked for rum. "Having no rum to give them," writes Gorrel, "they went away and

said no more to us." That was the last of Pontiac's great conspiracy so far as the Northern nations were concerned. In a little while the English went on their way to Montreal, safe and rejoicing.

All that summer, the conspiracy, like a wounded serpent, dragged its hideous length through the Valley of the Ohio, carrying horror wherever it went. In the autumn it came to an end. Pontiac, dejected and sullen, wandered off to the West, and was killed while carousing among the Illinois.

How little this noted conspiracy has been understood, is shown by a strange error into which, at this point, its chief historian has fallen. The Sauks and Foxes and other friends of Pontiac, we are gravely told, rose in fury to avenge his death, visiting their vengeance upon the Illinois as his murderers.¹ And the consequent carnage is described in terms of Homeric song. But the whole statement, however classically adorned, is marvelously untrue.

Our brief recital has proved that the Wiscon-

(1) Parkman, *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, II, 312. Parkman blindly follows a confused traditionary account given by some writers in the early part of this century. The war of the Sauks and Foxes against the Illinois was going on before Pontiac was born.

sin Indians, so far from being the allies and avengers of Pontiac, were his chief enemies. Their resistance broke up his plans and brought all his schemes to nought. If the prompt action of the Wisconsin Indians had not overawed the Ottawas and curbed the Chippewas, the latter, after completing their work in the North, would have gone to the help of their brethren at Detroit. The success of Pontiac would then have been assured. The irresolute Miamis would have flung themselves fully into the fight. And with the active aid of the Wisconsin tribes and their allies in the Northwest, the flames of revolt would have swept the continent.

One result would certainly have followed. The contest for American independence, which virtually began the year after the conspiracy ended, would have been indefinitely postponed. The thirteen colonies, so long as their frontier was infested by hordes of fierce and irreconcilable savages—"the most formidable foe upon the face of the earth"¹—would have little thought or desire of separating from the mother country. But all that was averted by the

(1) Barre, the companion of Wolfe, a man who knew Indians well, thus declared in the British parliament. Bancroft, *United States*, III, 337.

prompt action of the Wisconsin Indians at the very moment when everything hung trembling in the balance.

Thus the Power that so often uses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, used these savages for two great purposes; first, to undermine the rule of French despotism in the West; then, to secure the English in firm and peaceable possession of the continent. For a few years England held the grand empire in trust and then handed it over to its rightful inheritors, the freemen of America.

So much was done in Wisconsin for American independence. Let no pitiful prejudice of race obscure the work done by these wild, unconscious servants of liberty. Their manners were rude and their morals chaotic, but at heart they were less savage than their white antagonists. They had not attained to the niceties of civilization. Neither had the three hundred who died at Thermopylae nor the victors upon the field of Tours.

[THE END.]



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